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THE DOCTOR FROM TEXAS; Or, JOE PHENIX'S Shadow Clue.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.



"MY DEAR DOCTOR, I WANT YOU TO GIVE ME A POINTER ABOUT THIS MURDER CASE!" THE JEW EXCLAIMED.

THE Doctor from Texas;

OR,

Joe Phenix's Shadow Clue.

The Revelations of the Haversham Case.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,

AUTHOR OF THE "JOE PHENIX" NOVELS,
THE "DICK TALBOT" TALES, "THE
FRESH OF FRISCO," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE THUG'S MESSENGER.

A CROWDED and brilliant audience; the place, the Academy of Music, one of the largest theaters in gay New York, the New World metropolis; the time, only about a year ago, and the attraction which had brought the throng, The Bessy Manchester English Opera Company from the principal London theaters, as the announcements read, in the latest opera of the day, La Cigale—the Grasshopper, to render it into English.

The management had promised much; glowing reports of the fair *prima donna* had come from across the water, and on the first appearance of the troupe an immense audience had greeted them.

Miss Manchester was a revelation; she could act, she could sing; a beautiful girl of twenty-five, or thereabouts, with a lovely figure, she came, she saw, and conquered!

And now, on this Saturday night, the last performance of the first week, five hundred people had been turned away, unable to get seats.

The curtain has fallen on the first act; two men, with opera-glasses, are standing at the back of the parquet and surveying the brilliant theater-parties in the private boxes.

A movement of the crowd—the two men spy each other and come together.

One is tall and dark, the other short and light; both by their faces show that they belong to the race of the "chosen people," but one, the light fellow, is a German Jew, while the other is a Russian.

Both are well dressed—in fact, overdressed, but there is something in the bearing of the men which plainly indicates to the experienced eye that neither one is a gentleman.

Fine feathers do not always make fine birds!

They shake hands like old friends.

"By Jove, Mendez, you are about the last man I expected to see!" the dark fellow exclaimed. "I thought you had gone back to London for good."

"No, no; mine gootness, dere vas no monish dere, Orloff," Mendez replied, speaking with a strong accent.

"Well, you certainly look as if you were getting along all right."

"Oh, yesh, I am in clover."

"What are you doing?"

"Confidential man of business for Abraham Gootschild."

"What? the Broadway Thug, as the crooks call him? Old Gootschild, eh?"

The short fellow, who had a face like a fox, laughed.

"Dot ish a base slander got up by rascals who try to rob der old mans," he declared.

"Oh, yes, and he wouldn't try to rob anybody—the biggest 'fence' in the city—a man who receives more stolen goods than any other four men on that lay in New York."

"Ah, no, he ish an honest dealer—and if he has ever been careless in buying goods from men who had no right to sell dem, nobody has been smart enough to catch him," and the speaker chuckled merrily.

"You cannot tell me anything about the old man, Nosey!" the other declared. "For I know all about him; I am running a private detective office now. Here is my card."

"Michael Orloff and Co., Cosmopolitan Detective Agency, Vanderbilt Building, Broadway, New York." Mine gootness! V'at ish dot old saying about set a rogue to catch a rogue?" and the foxy fellow laughed in the face of the other.

"There is a deal of truth in it, and I am doing well; but, I say, how comes it that you are here to-night? I never knew you to go in for this sort of thing."

"Business, my tear!" Mendez replied with another grin.

"Dere is a bird in der house upon whose tail I must put some salt before he sleeps to-night."

"One of the old Thug's customers I suppose. I understand that he does quite a business in lending money to young men with good expectations?"

"Ah, yes, dere is my bird—in der left hand lower box—the nearest to the stage."

Orloff turned his glass upon the box in which sat two gentlemen.

One was tall and dark, with a full beard, having the appearance of an Englishman, a handsome, dashing-looking fellow, the other a good-looking young man of two and twenty.

"Humph! I know them both!" the Russian ejaculated. "The man with the beard is Captain Dudley MacIverson, a heavy swell from across the water, who claims to be a Scotch baronet, but whether he is or not, he is as sharp as a hawk, and the man who gets ahead of him will have to rise very early in the morning."

"I do not know anything about him—der other man is my mutton."

"Jack Haversham, eh? the son of old Arnold Haversham, the cotton-broker, who is supposed to be worth two or three millions of dollars. And is he your game?"

"Yesh, I vas told he come here to-night und dot I would find him. Well, solong, I must attend to der business. I v'll see you again some time," Mendez remarked, and then, pocketing his opera glasses, he made his way to the box.

As the door of the passage which led to the boxes was open, he had no difficulty in gaining access to the one in which sat the two gentlemen.

He entered without taking the trouble to knock.

The pair looked at him, surprised at the intrusion.

"Mister Haversham?" inquired Mendez with a servile bow.

"That is my name," the young New Yorker replied.

"I hope you vill hafe the gootness to excuse me, but I hafe come to see you on a very unpleasant bit of business," the Thug's messenger remarked with cringing politeness.

"I come from Mister Gootschild about a note of yours dot he holds for a t'ousand tollars; mit der interest it amounts to t'irteen hundred tollars und he must hafe der monish to-night."

Mendez was all humility both in speech and manner, yet there was a latent threat in his voice.

Young Haversham got red in the face, and glanced at his companion very much embarrassed.

MacIverson laughed outright.

"Don't mind me, old fellow!" he exclaimed. "I have been through this sort of thing often enough myself to understand that accidents of this kind will happen."

"But, I say, my man, isn't it rather odd for you to come and bother a gentleman when he is enjoying an evening's amusement with a demand of this kind?" the captain continued.

"Vell, sir, it ain't my fault. Mr. Gootschild is an odd mans, and vhen he takes a notion into his head, I hafe to do as he says," the man replied, in an humble way and with another servile bow.

"The monish is payable on demand, you know," he added.

"Yes, I am aware of that fact, but the agreement was that I was to have time on it—ample time—all I wanted, in fact, that was Mr. Gootschild's own words," Jack Haversham explained, evidently very much mortified.

"Ah, vell, I suppose Meester Gootschild is very much pressed himself for monish, or else he would not trouble you. I know dot he has met mit heavy loss," Mendez replied, with a doleful shake of his bushy head.

"Oh, gammon!" MacIverson cried. "That is the old money-lender's cry! Give us something fresh, my friend!"

"So s'help me! it is the truth!" the Jew declared.

"Certainly, of course, you are quite ready to swear to it!" the captain exclaimed, sarcastically. "Bat, I say, your principal sure-

ly doesn't think that this is the proper way to do business. He can't expect that a gentleman like Mr. Haversham here is in the habit of carrying around thirteen hundred dollars in his pockets ready to shell it out on demand."

"I do not know," the Jew replied, with a stolid face. "I vas told to ask for der monish."

"Well, supposing that it is not convenient for Mr. Haversham to pay to-night?" MacIverson asked, impatiently.

"Vell, then I shall be obliged to use some harsh measures," Mendez replied, still very humble and punctuating his words with low bows.

"Harsh measures!" cried Haversham, in indignant surprise.

"Yesh, but, mine gootness! you must not blame me!" Mendez replied, and he shook his head with a sad air. "I must do v'at I am told."

"Mister Gootschild he say to me, Mister Mendez, vill you be so goot as to go to der Academy of Music to-night, und if Mister Haversham is dere, present der bill, und tell him dot I must hafe der monish. If he has not got it he can very easily borrow it from some of his fr'en's, und you vill please gife him until der close of the performance to get der cash."

"Well, really, I must say that this is the most extraordinary proceeding!" MacIverson exclaimed.

"Supposing that my friend cannot get the money?" the captain asked.

"Ah, mine gootness! den I shall hafe to do something very disagreeable," Mendez answered, in a melancholy way. "I hafe a gentlemen mit a warrant, und I shall hafe to hafe Mr. Haversham arrested. It makes mine heart bleed, but I must do v'at Mister Gootschild says." And then he heaved a deep sigh and shook his head, as though he was distressed beyond measure.

"But this is blamed nonsense!" Jack Haversham exclaimed, firing up. "A man cannot be arrested for a little debt of this kind!"

"Ah, yesh, but Mister Gootschild tink dot everyting is not right," the Jew explained, in the most humble manner possible.

"Not right? What do you mean?" the young man exclaimed.

"Has your principal taken leave of his senses?" MacIverson cried. "Does he think that a man like Jack Haversham here is going to bolt for a paltry sum like thirteen hundred dollars?"

"On, no, he has no idea dot Mister Haversham vill run away, but dere ish a mistake about der matter—one of those mistakes dot der lawyers call fraud."

"Fraud! how do you make that out?" Haversham inquired, in amazement.

"When Mister Gootschild lent der monish he t'ought dot you were Mister Arnold Haversham's son and his heir, und now he has found out dot you are no relation, und dot ish where der fraud comes in," the Jew replied.

CHAPTER II.

THE STAGE SIREN.

MACIVERSON leaned back in his chair and laughed.

"Well, well, by Jove! if this isn't about as big a blunder as I have heard of in years I wish I may be shot!" he exclaimed.

"But this is utterly ridiculous!" Haversham cried. "I never told Mr. Gootschild that I was Arnold Haversham's son and heir. He did not question me, nor did I volunteer any information."

"You must pardon me, Mister Haversham, if I tells you shust how der t'ing is," Mendez remarked. "Der old gentlemen has got an idea dot you told him dot you vas der son of der rich broker, und dot vas v'hy he lent der cash, und now dot he has found out dot you are not, he t'inks dot it ish a case of getting money by fraud."

"If you can pay up he is villing to say nothings about it, but if you can't hand over der cash den der law must take its course."

"It is perfectly absurd, of course, Jack, but really the old money-lender has got you in a tight place," MacIverson observed.

"He is going to try and make out a case of false pretenses, and although there isn't a doubt that he will not be able to make the charge good in a court, yet it will put you

in a most unpleasant situation," the captain continued.

"Yesh, dot vas true," Mendez remarked with a melancholy shake of the head.

"Here it vas Saturday night. If der arrest vas made, no bail can be had until Monday, und it would not be pleasant to lie in der prison all day on Sunday," the Jew explained with a deep sigh.

"Well, you have an hour and a half to arrange the matter," MacIverson observed, abruptly. "I suppose you are willing to take Mr. Haversham's word that he will not attempt to escape during the performance?"

"Oh, yesh! I will be glad to do it. This is a most unpleasant duty, gentlemen, und I hope dot you will bear in mind dot I have tried to make everything as agreeable as possible," Mendez remarked, and then, with a low bow, he backed out of the box.

"Captain, I am really astounded!" Jack Haversham declared.

"I do not doubt it, and I thought it wise to get rid of the fellow so we can talk the matter over at our leisure," MacIverson observed in a reflective way.

"How did you happen to borrow this money?" he asked, after a moment's pause.

"I was in a broker's office in Wall street, where I occasionally take a flyer in stocks, and this old Jew was introduced to me," the young man explained. "He was very friendly and asked if I was the Jack Haversham of the Arnold Haversham firm, and when I replied that I was, he became confidential, explained that he made a business of loaning money, and said that if I saw a good chance to use a few thousands in a business operation—stocks, or anything of the kind—he would be glad to advance it."

"I understand!" the captain exclaimed, with a laugh. "You did know of a 'sure thing,' certain to win, and you borrowed the money."

"Exactly, and like a good many other sure things, it turned out a loss instead of a profit," Jack Haversham admitted, with a grimace.

"That was three months ago, and by straining every nerve I have paid him back all but this thirteen hundred."

"You are in a deuce of a fix!" the captain exclaimed. "I don't suppose there is any chance of your getting the money from any of your friends who may be in the audience to-night?" MacIverson questioned, with a thoughtful look around the house.

"No, I am certain that there is not."

"I could let you have a hundred, but that is all, for my monthly remittance will not arrive until the last of next week."

"I am much obliged, but I fear the sum wouldn't be of any use. For some mysterious reason the old man has taken it into his head to be ugly."

"It is deuced unfortunate, for I was going to introduce you to Miss Manchester to-morrow."

"What! are you acquainted with this charming creature?" Jack Haversham exclaimed, in surprise.

MacIverson laughed.

"I must make a confession, I suppose, old fellow," the captain remarked. "I suppose you thought that I was smitten with this bright, particular star?"

"Well, you certainly have displayed all the symptoms. Didn't you hire this box for the entire week, and by your invitation have I not been your guest, and so been able to enjoy the charming acting and singing of this beautiful girl night after night?"

"And I don't doubt that you thought that it was a reckless bit of extravagance on my part?"

"Well, I must admit that I certainly thought that you were going it at a pretty lively gait. You surely have spent fifty dollars for bouquets this week!"

"Old fellow, I am going to let you in for a bit of a secret, but mind, I am going to trust to your discretion and you must not give it away on any account."

"Oh, you can depend upon me!"

"Well, then, my dear boy, I don't doubt that you will be surprised when I tell you that neither the box nor the flowers have cost me a penny—not a single penny!"

"Is it possible?"

"Quite correct! and the explanation is that I have an interest in the troupe."

"Ah, yes, I see."

"It came about just by accident. I knew the manager of the troupe in England—in fact, was well acquainted with Miss Manchester there, and was an ardent admirer of the lady, but although she was very friendly, yet she never accepted my attentions. And that is the reason by the way why I am not going to waste my time in attempting a conquest on this side of the water."

"I comprehend."

"The manager ran across me just after he arrived; he was in a peck of trouble. His money man had deserted him, and he was badly in need of a few hundred dollars; being a stranger in this country he knew not where to get the money, so he made a proposition to me to buy a small interest in the troupe, and as a sort of a lark, I did so."

"Well, judging from what I have seen here, it is not going to turn out to be a losing speculation."

"Oh, no, and then it gave me the opportunity to renew my acquaintance with Miss Manchester."

"I will admit to you, Jack, that I did have a sort of sneaking idea that she might be inclined to look upon me now with favorable eyes, but the first interview I had with her dispelled that notion," the captain admitted with a laugh.

"Still insensible to your attractions?"

"Yes, and now I am going to tell you a little secret, but you mustn't get too vain over it."

"Oh, no, of course not!" and Jack Haversham laughed in his good-natured way.

"This divine child of genius is a peculiar creature, and takes very odd notions once in a while; of course, these superior beings are privileged to do that sort of thing."

"Now, prepare to be surprised! The lady has noticed you in the box, and you have produced a great impression upon her."

"Nonsense!"

"It is a fact, and she has asked me to introduce you."

"Is it possible? Really I am flattered!"

"And when, just to torment her, I said that I did not know as I would, she replied: 'Oh, I have found out all about him, and if you will not introduce me, I can easily get some one else to do it.'"

"She rather had you there!"

"Oh, yes, and so I replied that if she was a very good girl, and treated me well, possibly I would introduce you to her some time."

Upon the stage trooped the beauties of the chorus, and then came the pretty prima donna, and as she came to the foot of the stage the beautiful English actress smiled coquettishly at Jack Haversham.

"You are in luck, old fellow!" the bearded captain exclaimed. "It is evident from that look that she is determined to make your acquaintance. By Jove! you must be a regular lady-killer!"

"Have done with your foolishness!" the other replied.

The performance continued, and every once in a while, when Miss Manchester could do so without attracting too pointedly the notice of the audience, she cast a glance at the two in the box.

The gentlemen watched her with great interest until she made her exit, which was accompanied by a most enthusiastic burst of applause.

"Really, I think she is both acting and singing better to-night than ever before," MacIverson remarked.

"She is most certainly an extremely brilliant and talented girl!"

"And to think, lucky dog that you are, that you have succeeded in catching the fancy of this beautiful siren!"

"Nonsense! this is some joke of yours!" Jack Haversham retorted.

"No, it isn't!" the captain declared. "I give you my word that it is all straight and above board. She has taken an interest in you and is anxious for an introduction."

"It is a caprice, of course, such as these pretty, half-spoiled darlings of fortune take sometimes."

"By Jove! an idea has just come to me!" MacIverson declared, abruptly.

"Here is the friend who can lend you the thirteen hundred dollars."

"Who?"

"Miss Manchester!"

"You are not in earnest?"

"Never was more so in my life!" the captain declared. "She draws her money for the week to-night, and there is probably a couple of thousand dollars coming to her, and I feel sure that if she knew that you were in trouble for a paltry thirteen hundred she would be glad to help you out."

"But I am an utter stranger."

"Not at all! Didn't she boast to me that she knew all about you?"

"Old fellow, the idea is absurd!" Jack Haversham declared, "I never would have the cheek to ask her."

"I will do it for you, I don't mind," the captain responded. "You are in a tight place, and you must get out somehow!"

"Just write me out an I. O. U. for the money!" MacIverson continued.

Then he produced a fountain-pen ready charged with ink and tore a leaf out of a memorandum-book.

"Well, I will do it, but it is an awful cheeky thing!" Jack Haversham remarked, as he wrote the note.

"Never you mind! 'Needs must when the devil drives,' and the bailiffs are waiting!"

Then the captain hurried from the box, while the young New Yorker settled back in his chair to watch the performance in a very peculiar state of mind.

MacIverson did not return until the curtain was down and the entre-act music nearly over.

"I have it, my dear boy!" he exclaimed, in triumph, producing a huge roll of bank-bills.

"The lady was delighted to be able to accommodate you, and you are to take dinner with her to-morrow."

"And, by the way, I ran across that Jew jackal in the lobby, so I told him to drop in here in about five minutes."

Hardly had the sentence been spoken when Mendez made his appearance.

He came sneaking into the box as humble and servile as before.

"You have the note all right?" the captain demanded.

"Yesh, sir," and he produced the slip of paper.

"Count this money!" MacIverson said.

The eyes of the Jew sparkled as he took the roll.

"Thirteen hundred dollars—quite correct, sir, and I am ever so mooch obliged!" he announced with a most elaborate bow.

"Here's another dollar! Go and get yourself a drink at our expense!" the captain exclaimed, throwing the bill at the Jew as one would throw a bone to a dog.

Mendez was profuse in his thanks as he retreated from the box.

The two remained in the theater until the performance ended, and then in the lobby they separated, the captain having spied some acquaintances, and took leave of the young New Yorker to join them.

CHAPTER III.

COLONEL JIM.

As Jack Haversham came down the steps of the Academy of Music, his attention was attracted to an odd-looking man, who stood on the edge of the sidewalk by the curbstone.

There was something about the man's face which seemed to be familiar to the gay young New Yorker.

The stranger was well on in years, a man of fifty-five or sixty, with a massive face, which seemed to be a little bloated, either from the ravages of age, or else from dissipation, or the pleasures of the table.

He had iron-gray hair, which curled in little crispy ringlets, a long mustache, a luxuriant imperial of the same hue, and these adornments gave him a foreign aspect.

The man was nicely dressed, wearing a bright overcoat, and a dark hat of the latest Alpine pattern.

The peculiar thing about the man's face was his eyes, which were an odd light blue, deep sunken in the head, and never quiet.

A most careful examination this person was making of all the gentlemen who came out of the temple of amusement, and so it happened that his gaze met that of Jack Haversham.

The man gave a start of recognition, and as the young man reached the pavement he advanced and greeted him with outstretched hand.

"If I do not mistake this is Jack Haversham?" he exclaimed. And then grasping the hand of the young man, he shook it warmly.

But there was something unpleasant in the clasp of the old man.

His palm was cold and clammy, and, somehow, it made the young man shiver, so he released his hand as soon as he could do so without appearing discourteous.

"You really have the advantage of me, sir," Jack Haversham remarked.

"Ah, yes, true, I had forgotten!" the old gentleman exclaimed, with a sigh. "Although I recognized you as soon as my eyes fell upon your face, on account of the strong resemblance you bear to your uncle, Arnold Haversham, yet I suppose that twenty years' absence from my native land, during which time I have been knocking about in all parts of the globe, have changed me so much that it would puzzle my oldest and dearest friend to recognize me now."

"Your face is certainly familiar to me," the young man remarked. "Yet it is not possible for me to place you just at present."

"There isn't anything strange about that," the other observed, with a smile, and Jack Haversham noted with wonder that when his face lit up he seemed to be a good ten years younger.

"No, sir, nothing odd about your not recognizing me, for we have not looked at each other for twenty years, and on the occasion of our last meeting you were a baby in long clothes."

The young man laughed.

"It is not strange, then, that I am not able to recall you."

"Not at all," the other remarked. "But when I speak my name you will remember me quickly enough."

"I am Colonel Jim!"

The old man drew himself up proudly as he spoke, and assumed a military bearing.

"Ah, yes, I know you now!"

And again the two shook hands, an operation which the young man would gladly have avoided, for never in his life had he touched a palm so cold, clammy, and disagreeable.

And who was Colonel Jim?

Jack Haversham could not have given much information concerning the gentleman, although he knew of his existence.

As the colonel had said, he had been away from New York for twenty years, and there seemed to be some little mystery concerning him, for the young man had not heard Arnold Haversham speak of Colonel Jim more than a dozen times in his life.

And on these occasions he had been forced to speak, replying to the question of some old acquaintance of the family, as to what had become of the colonel.

The old gentleman's reply was always about the same:

"I really don't know much about the colonel, for I only hear from him once or twice a year. He has always liked a life of adventure, you know, so has become a sort of a soldier of fortune, and the last time I heard from him he was in India in the service of one of the native princes, organizing his army."

Then would follow a few words, usually in regard to the fact that the colonel had won his rank in the War of the Rebellion, and had been regarded as a remarkably able officer.

And, although he had never heard Arnold Haversham speak in any way against the colonel, yet Jack had formed the idea that Colonel Jim was the black sheep of the Haversham family.

"Well, well, I am glad to get back to New York, and as I am getting rather old to be knocking 'round the world, serving under a dozen different flags in a dozen different years, I think I shall settle down to a peaceful home life for the rest of my allotted years."

"I should think it was advisable."

"By the way, have you ten or twenty dollars in your pocket that you can spare just as well as not?" the old gentleman asked, putting his arm familiarly in that of the young man, and leading up the street toward Broadway.

"I shall go to a hotel to-night, and although I have a draft in my pocket on Brown Brothers, the English bankers, yet I hate to ask a strange hotel man to cash it for me."

"Tell my dear brother, Arnold, of my arrival, and say I will call upon him to-morrow," the colonel continued.

The moment that the old gentleman made the request for money, thoughts of the bunco men and their games came immediately into Jack Haversham's mind.

But he dismissed the idea as being most improbable.

Now that he had had an opportunity to study the stranger's face he could plainly see how strong was the resemblance he bore to Arnold Haversham, and in his mind there was no doubt that he was the mysterious Colonel Jim returned again to his home.

"I can spare you ten if that will answer," the young man replied.

"Certainly! that will be ample. Thanks!" he exclaimed, as Jack Haversham gave him the bank note.

"All I want is enough to square my hotel bill, as I am compelled to go without any luggage."

"All my traps went on the wrong train at San Francisco, and I left my valet there to attend to the matter while I pushed on East."

"To-morrow I can cash my draft, and then I will be all right."

By this time the pair had come to Broadway.

"Ah, there is my car!" Colonel Jim exclaimed. "*Au revoir!* I will see you soon again!"

And then, with remarkable alacrity for one so well-advanced in years, he ran and jumped upon the car.

"I wonder if I was a flat to let him have the money?" Jack Haversham murmured as he stood upon the corner and gazed after the car.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said a strange voice.

He turned. A well-dressed, dark-faced, stolid-featured stranger, with the look of a professional man, and apparently a foreigner, to judge from his dark complexion and his general appearance, stood by his side.

"Excuse me, a stranger, for accosting you. My name is Ambrose Valentine; I am a doctor by profession. London, England, is my home, and I have made a specialty of diseases of the nerves, and, incidentally, have given much attention to disorders proceeding from an undue indulgence in stimulants: alcohol, opium and the like."

"I noticed as I came from the Academy that you were accosted by that gray-haired gentleman."

"May I ask if he is an acquaintance—a friend of yours, and if you take an interest in him?—believe me, sir, I have a good reason for putting the question, or else I would not dream of troubling you."

The gentleman spoke with refined politeness, yet with a certain air of command such as becomes a second nature to a man used for years to exercise authority over others.

Under these circumstances Jack Haversham did not hesitate to answer.

"Well, really, I am a little puzzled how to reply," the young man answered.

"He is an acquaintance, and then again he isn't. That is a sort of a riddle, eh?" he continued with a smile.

"Yes, I should say so."

"A few words will explain. My name is Jack Haversham and I am in the office of Arnold Haversham & Company, Cotton Brokers, in Beaver street. This gentleman is a brother of Mr. Arnold Haversham. Colonel James Haversham he is called, and although he had no difficulty in recognizing me, on account of the resemblance which he says I bear to Mr. Arnold Haversham, yet as I had not seen him since I was a baby in long clothes I would not have known him if he had not recalled himself to my recollection."

"Colonel James Haversham!" exclaimed the stranger with a peculiar look upon his dark face. "The name is familiar to me. Can you tell me if he was ever in India?"

"Oh, yes, spent quite a number of years there, I believe. Really I know very little about him, for Mr. Arnold Haversham is a strange, reserved man, not at all given to talking, and I do not think I have heard him speak of his brother over a dozen times in as many years."

"Yes, I see."

"About all I know of the colonel is that he won his rank of colonel in the War of the

Rebellion, and was said to be possessed of great military talents. Then, after the war ended, he was so loth to return to civil life that he went abroad to seek adventures as a soldier of fortune."

"It is, probably, the same man whose name I heard mentioned in India," the doctor remarked.

Jack Haversham was a quick-witted young fellow, and there was something in the tone of the speaker which made him suspect that the mention which he had heard of Colonel Jim was not a favorable one.

"I have just returned from India and am on my way to London," the doctor explained.

"From Chicago I traveled in the same car with this gentleman, and as he had the next berth to mine I was afforded an opportunity to observe him."

"I comprehend, and I suppose it becomes a second nature for a man in your profession to study those around him."

"Well, in this case the man's peculiar actions not only attracted, but compelled my attention," the doctor admitted.

"As I explained to you, I am an expert in a special line, and so, after I had made a careful study of this gentleman, I came to the conclusion that he ought to place himself in the hands of a first-class medical man as soon as possible, for I think he is on the eve of a complete break-down."

"Well, I am not much of a judge of this sort of thing, of course," Jack Haversham observed, slowly. "But from the peculiar expression of his face, I got the idea that he was a hard drinker."

"Unless I am greatly mistaken—and there is a chance that I may be, for it is not possible for a man to be always correct in his judgment—this man is on the verge of a total collapse, and needs both immediate and careful attention."

"Possibly it would be wise for you to speak to Mr. Arnold Haversham in regard to the matter."

"It will not do any harm, and I am very much obliged to you, sir, for taking the trouble to give me the information."

"You are quite welcome. I but performed a duty which I owe to mankind."

Then the doctor bowed in a ceremonious way and departed, while Jack Haversham went on up Broadway.

It was his intention to get some oysters and a glass of ale before going to bed, and as he entered one of the popular up-town saloons he met a red-faced, jovial-looking, white-haired old gentleman, who greeted him in the warmest manner.

CHAPTER IV.

A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT.

A WELL-KNOWN man about town was the old gentleman, who while he had the white hair of a centenarian, possessed the carriage and the face of a man of forty; really as young an old man as the great metropolis could boast.

Jefferson Vanderpool he was called, a lawyer by profession, and as he had once sat on the bench was universally called Judge.

Vanderpool, while pursuing his law practice, had gone into politics.

He was one of the "bosses" of the ruling political party which held such a powerful sway over New York.

One of the "powers" whose nod made and unmade men.

Twenty years of active political life had enabled the judge to "feather his nest" nicely, and Vanderpool was rated as being worth a couple of millions.

Personally Vanderpool was a jolly sort of man, a capital after-dinner speaker, and no great banquet in the city was considered to be complete without his presence.

He was hail-fellow-well-met with all the boys, and there were few men in the city who possessed more influence.

Despite the difference which existed in their years, the judge and Jack Haversham were great friends.

The young man, after getting through at college, had entered the judge's office to study law, but after six months' trial both master and pupil came to the conclusion that the young man was never cut out for a lawyer, and so Arnold Haversham had taken him into his office.

This was the first time that the two had

met in four months, as the judge had been absent from New York, making a tour of Europe.

After the usual greetings were exchanged, the judge said:

"Jack, my boy, you are just in time to join me in disposing of a bottle and a bird. I hate to feed alone, and I was just waiting for some acquaintance to come in whom I might invite to share a frugal repast."

The young man accepted the invitation in the same frank spirit in which it was given, and the two went to a private room.

"Well, how goes everything?" the judge asked after the order had been given and the waiter departed.

"Not married yet, eh?"

"No, not yet."

"I say, my boy, why don't you hit it off with your cousin, the dashing Miss Victorine? There would be a magnificent match for you. Your worthy uncle is said to be worth five or six millions, and the girl, being an only child, will come in for about all of it, I think, for, from what I know of Arnold Haversham, he is not the man to throw his money away on hospitals, libraries, or anything of that kind."

The young man laughed.

"You are right. The man who gets anything out of the old gentleman in that line will have to be a wonderful fellow."

"But, come now, I say, my boy, why don't you try for Miss Victorine?" the judge persisted in his smooth, insinuating way.

"She is a handsome girl, just a little bit inclined to be masculine in her tastes, fond of horses and dogs, and a lot of nonsense of that kind, but after she is married, and has three or four babies to look after she will find that they are a great deal more interesting than the beasts."

"No, there is no chance for me in that quarter, although I will admit to you, when I would not to anybody else, that if things were different, it would be a very easy matter for me to fall heels over head in love with Miss Victorine, for she is a very charming girl in a great many respects," Jack Haversham observed in a serious way.

"You surprise me!" the judge declared.

"What particular objection is there?—possibly the old gentleman might object, but young people nowadays don't pay much attention to objections of that sort."

"Judge, I suppose that it is natural for a man to confide in some one, for it rather relieves the man," Jack Haversham said in a peculiar abrupt way.

"Oh, yes, from the days of King Midas—when the slave had to whisper to the reeds that his master had ass's ears—to the present time the average human being has a strong inclination to confide his secrets to another's care, and no doubt it does help a man to bear 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' with more patience."

"And, my dear boy, if you have anything on your mind, I will be glad to tender you my advice, which, of course, you will not take, for it is a well settled rule that a man asks advice and then goes ahead on his own ideas."

The other laughed.

"Well, I don't know as I am in any particular need of advice, but I don't mind telling you why it is that I can't lay siege to Victorine."

"Fire away!"

"I grew up with the idea that I was the nephew of Arnold Haversham."

"And ar'n't you?"

"Not according to him."

"I am surprised!"

"Not until after I had graduated from college did I know the truth. Then Mr. Haversham told me that I was not the son of his sister, Alexandria, who married a worthless fellow, from whom she was divorced after a few years of wedded life, and in another year she died."

"Although I am an old New Yorker, and well posted in regard to nearly all the prominent men of the time, I don't know much about the Havershams, for they only came to the city some twenty-odd years ago," the judge remarked.

"His story to me was that he was called to the death-bed of his sister, and was told by her that the child whom she called hers was only one taken from a foundling hospital after the death of her own baby."

"Rather strange!"

"And she had never legally adopted it, but she hoped he, Mr. Haversham, would see that it was taken care of in the future. He said that he would, and had the child brought up as though it had been his sister's babe, only giving it his own family name."

"You see," he said, after he made this explanation, "you have really no legal claim on me, but as you have always behaved well, and given me no trouble, I intend to treat you exactly as if you were my nephew."

"That was a pleasant announcement!"

"I will allow you a liberal sum for your support, and at my death you will receive enough money to render you independent of the world; my home will be yours, but I must caution you in regard to my daughter, Victorine."

"Aha! now it is getting interesting!"

"It has always been my policy to keep you apart, so that neither one of you should grow up with a foolish liking for each other, but now you are both old enough to be sensible. It is not my wish that there should be any love affair between you, and a marriage is out of the question, for in the event of either one of you daring to disobey my wishes I would withdraw all support and make life miserable."

"That is hard and merciless Arnold Haversham, to a dot!" the judge declared.

"Then he asked me to take an oath on the Bible that I would not seek to engage his daughter's affections, and as I didn't care a snap of my finger for the girl I willingly complied."

"I say, my dear boy, if you hadn't taken the oath, and he should ask you to do so tomorrow, would you do it?" the judge asked, with a shrewd twinkle in his eyes.

"No indeed! I would not!" Jack Haversham declared, promptly. "For since I lived in the house and become well acquainted with her, a liking has grown up in my heart which would speedily develop into love if it had half a chance."

"And how about the lady? Do you think she cares anything about you?"

"Well, she likes me; I don't think she loves me, but as she doesn't love anybody else I would stand a chance if this deuced oath wasn't in the way."

"Ah, well, you are both young—you can afford to wait for some years, and time works wonders, you know."

The arrival of the waiter with the refreshments interrupted the conversation, and this subject was not again touched upon.

At the conclusion of the meal the pair walked over to Gramercy Square together.

Both the judge and Arnold Haversham lived in this old-time fashionable quarter of the great metropolis.

The pair bid each other good-night at the judge's house, and Jack went on to his own.

As he opened the door he was greeted by the old English butler, pale with affright.

"Oh, Mr. Jack, Mr. Haversham is dead, and I am afraid he has been murdered!" the man exclaimed.

CHAPTER V.

THE INVESTIGATION.

JACK HAVERSHAM stared at the old Englishman in amazement, and his first thought was that the old man must have been drinking, so utterly astounded was he by the startling declaration.

"What do you mean?" he cried.

"Oh, sir, I do not wonder that you are horrified, for it is a most awful thing, sir!" the butler declared, wringing his hands and shaking his head as though he was about to take leave of his senses.

"But is it possible?"

"Oh, yes, sir, there isn't any mistake, worse luck!" the old Englishman declared.

"But I acted promptly, sir, for just as soon as I made the awful discovery I sent for a doctor and for the police."

"Tell me all the particulars!" Jack Haversham exclaimed, as he entered the house and closed the door behind him.

"Indeed, sir, there isn't much to tell," the butler replied.

"Mr. Haversham was in his library, and, as you know, sir, it has always been his custom to have a little lunch with a bottle of wine before he went to bed."

The young man nodded assent, for the old gentleman always had his bottle of wine and

his lunch every night before retiring as long as he could remember.

"I always made it a rule to attend to this little matter myself, when it was possible for me to do so, for I knew that Mr. Haversham was more particular about this lunch than the regular meals."

Again Jack Haversham nodded, for he knew this to be the truth.

"Well, sir, it has always been the old gentleman's custom to ring when he was ready for his lunch, and to-night, as usual, I waited in the drawing-room for the signal."

"I sat in the big chair, and, as the room was warm, fell into a doze—I have often done that before, Mr. Jack, but as I am an extremely light sleeper, the sound of the bell always wakes me."

"Yes, I am aware of that fact."

"But to-night I dozed until midnight and then when I looked at the clock and saw how late it was I immediately jumped to the conclusion that Mr. Haversham must have fallen asleep, for I was quite certain that he had not rung the bell for it never fails to wake me, so I hurried to the library."

"I knocked; there wasn't any answer, so after knocking again I made bold to enter."

"Oh, Mr. Jack! there upon the floor, with the blood flowing from an awful wound in his head, I saw my poor master!"

The voice of the old man trembled and big tears stood in his eyes.

"It must have been horrible!" the young man exclaimed, deeply impressed by the recital.

"Oh, Mr. Jack, horrible wasn't any word for it!" the old Englishman declared.

"I was that weak that anybody could have knocked me down with a feather!"

"The fact that blood was flowing from a wound in the head, gave you the impression, I presume, that there had been foul play?"

"Yes, sir, and then the safe was open and Mr. Haversham's private papers were strewn about the room just for all the world, sir, as if some one had been searching for valuables."

"It is very strange, indeed, but how could any one have gained access to the house?"

"Well, Mr. Jack, I don't really see how anybody could have got in," the butler replied.

"But I have taken all the proper precautions," he continued. "Just as soon as I recovered from the shock of the tragedy I put Robert, the footman, on guard at the door with strict instructions not to allow a soul to enter the room."

"That was right. Nothing in the apartment should be disturbed until an investigation is made by the proper officers."

At this point the conversation was interrupted by an abrupt ring of the door-bell.

The butler hastened to answer the summons.

It was the family physician of Arnold Haversham, Dr. Washington Merriweather, a portly, imposing man of fifty, with iron gray hair and a long beard of the same hue, who had rung.

The doctor was one of the leading physicians of the city, and a personal friend of the dead man.

With the doctor were two gentlemen who, although they were dressed in plain, dark suits, like ordinary citizens, yet had about them that peculiar air of authority which to the observant eye indicated that the bearer holds an official rank.

The first of the two, a tall, muscular man, with massive features, short-cut black hair, thickly interspersed with gray, and a bristling mustache, was Daniel Grimshaw, the police inspector of the district, while the other, who was short and thick-set, with red hair, and a smoothly-shaven, florid face, was Detective Patrick O'Callahan, of the Central Office.

As it happened both of the two were in the police station when the news of the tragedy had been brought, and they came immediately to investigate the matter, meeting the physician, with whom they were acquainted, on the steps of the house.

The doctor introduced the inspector and the detective to Jack Haversham, and then remarked:

"This is a dreadful affair!"

"Yes, and the blow is so sudden that I am almost dazed by it," the young man replied.

Then he explained how he had just come

in, and therefore knew nothing of the tragedy beyond the bare announcement.

The butler repeated his story, laying particular stress upon the care he had taken that nothing in the room should be touched.

The inspector signified his approval of this caution, and then led the way to the library.

"This will be a terrible blow to Miss Victorine," the doctor remarked. "Has the sad intelligence been conveyed to her yet?"

"No, sir," the butler replied. "She went to bed about eleven o'clock, and I have been so frustrated by this dreadful tragedy that I never thought to have her waked."

"It is just as well," Dr. Merriweather observed. "I will break the news to her after the examination is made."

The library was a spacious apartment, sumptuously fitted up, and in the center of the room, close by a gorgeous Mexican marble table, lay the mortal remains of the master of the mansion.

Arnold Haversham had just reached his sixty-second year when he had been thus unceremoniously stricken down by the cold hand of the tyrant, grim Death.

He was a tall, slenderly-built man, with white hair and flowing mutton-chop whiskers, in the English style, of the same hue.

While the doctor proceeded to make an examination into the cause of the death, the inspector and the detective made a careful survey of the room.

As the butler had said, the safe was open, and some of the dead man's papers were on the floor, but to the experienced eyes of the two man-hunters it did not appear as if any stranger had removed the papers while searching for valuables.

On the contrary they had the impression that Mr. Haversham himself had taken the articles from the safe, for they were placed upon the floor in regular order, not tumbled out in confusion, as a robber, in a hurry to secure his plunder, and get off, would be apt to do.

"The wound in the temple would be sufficient to cause death," the doctor announced. "But I am really at a loss to guess the kind of weapon which could have produced such a hurt."

The lynx-eyed O'Callahan had caught sight of a spot of blood upon the edge of the marble table.

"Couldn't the wound have been caused by the sharp corner of this table, if the man had been taken with a sudden faintness and fallen heavily against it?" the shrewd detective asked.

"Yes, undoubtedly! such an accident would cause a wound of this kind," Doctor Merriweather replied.

"Did anybody call upon Mr. Haversham this evening?" the inspector asked.

"No, sir, not a soul!" the butler replied.

"Could any one have got into the house without your knowledge?" the police chief questioned.

"I do not think they could, sir," the Englishman replied. "I made the rounds at ten o'clock, as usual, and saw that all the doors and windows were securely fastened."

"Mr. Haversham was very particular about this, and I always attended to it myself," the butler continued. "Then Robert here attended to the door bell, and he can tell you that there were no callers this evening."

The scared-looking footman, a tall, lanky, overgrown boy, nodded assent.

"Was Mr. Haversham in the habit of keeping money in his safe—any large amount?" the inspector asked.

"Well, really, I couldn't say positively, but it is my impression that he did not. It was his custom to draw checks for his bills," the butler replied.

"Do you know anything in regard to this?" the police official asked, addressing Jack.

"On two or three occasions, possibly, not more, I think, I have known him to have a few hundred dollars in the safe; at these times he had reasons for wishing to pay in bank-notes instead of by check, but, as a rule, I am quite sure he did not keep any money to speak of here," the young man replied.

"And I presume you do not know whether he had any money in this safe to-night or not?" the inspector asked.

"No, sir, I do not know."

"We will make a careful examination of

the house," the inspector said. "And if there has been any forcible entry made, we will be pretty certain to discover it."

"But you are rather inclined to think that this is not the work of desperadoes?" the doctor remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"At present it certainly appears to me as if Mr. Haversham's death was an accidental one. He was seized with a sudden faintness, fell, striking his head against the table, and the wound produced death," Grimshaw explained.

"It is possible, of course, that it happened in that way, but it will require an examination to settle the matter," the doctor observed, evidently not quite satisfied.

"I will have the coroner notified, and by the time we get at the inquest to-morrow, it is possible that we may have some new evidence," the inspector remarked.

"Send a message to the undertaker, Jack, and I will remain until he arrives with his men, because, as this is an important case, we cannot use too much care," the doctor said.

"Whether the death came from accident or from violence at the hands of unknown ruffians, we must use all possible means to get at the truth," Merriweather continued.

"Clark is the best man for you, and if you like, I will write a line explaining the gravity of the case so he will be sure to come himself," the doctor added.

"If you will be so kind, doctor, I will be much obliged," Jack Haversham remarked.

"I am very glad indeed to be able to be of assistance in this extremity!" Merriweather declared, and immediately proceeded to write the note.

"We will make an examination, and then I will notify the coroner, and have him come around as soon as possible," the inspector remarked.

"In all probability I can get him here as soon as the undertaker," he added.

Then the two sleuth-hounds made a careful inspection of the premises, but every door and window was securely fastened.

"Well, if there has been foul play, the work was done by some one in the house!" the police chief declared.

CHAPTER VI.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER.

THE two were at the lower door, the one which led from the street into the basement, when the inspector made this remark, and as the search was over, they were about to return to the upper regions.

"Do you think this is a house job?"

"Well, I don't know exactly what to think, for as yet there isn't much of anything to go on," the official replied, in a reflective way.

"But if I had to give a solution right off to the puzzle I think I should be apt to declare that nobody but the old man himself had a hand in his death."

"Accident, eh?"

"Yes, I think so. Were you acquainted with this Haversham?"

"No, not particularly. I knew he was a wealthy cotton-broker and bore the reputation of being a close-fisted old fellow."

"That's right! He had plenty of money and knew how to take care of it as well as any man in this town."

"I have known him for twenty years, away back to the time when I first went on the force," the officer continued. "And so it happens that I am knowing to a fact, which mighty few of this old fellow's friends have any idea of, and that is that he was a fearful hard drinker."

"You don't mean it?"

"Honest! it is a fact!" the inspector declared, impressively.

"He was one of those peculiar men, you know, who never touched liquor during the daytime, but when it came to ten or eleven at night, then he would fill up like a lord!"

"Perhaps he had his load on to-night and that is how he came to tumble against the table," the detective suggested.

"I had that thought in my mind just as soon as I knew that he had hurt himself by falling against the table, but as I saw the doctor had got the notion into his head that there had been foul play, I concluded to keep quiet, for if I had said out bluntly that to my thinking there wasn't any mystery about the

case—the old man had so big a load on that he wasn't able to take care of himself and that was all there was to it—they would have been frightfully indignant."

"Oh, you can bet high on that!" O'Callahan assented.

"But when the coroner gets hold of the case the facts will come out!" the inspector declared.

And so they did, but not in the way that the astute police chief anticipated.

The shrewdest of men make mistakes sometimes.

The undertaker and the coroner arrived within a few minutes of each other, and with Mr. Clark, the undertaker, came the gentleman who had accosted Jack Haversham on Broadway in regard to Colonel Jim, Doctor Ambrose Valentine.

Mr. Clark was his cousin, he was a guest at the undertaker's house, and so when the call was sent he had volunteered to assist in the emergency, for, as it happened, none of Mr. Clark's assistants were at hand.

Valentine explained it is to Jack Haversham while the rest were busy exchanging salutations.

The dry details of the examination are of but little interest, so we will not take up time by relating them, but come at once to the verdict which the coroner's jury rendered on the next day when the regular formal examination was held.

To the surprise of the two sleuth-hounds the verdict was that Mr. Haversham had been murdered.

Although the wound in the temple, which beyond a doubt had been made by falling upon the sharp corner of the table, was sufficient to cause death, yet both the old doctor and the young one testified that Arnold Haversham had been strangled out of existence, and it was their impression that the wound in the head had been inflicted after the man had been throttled.

Naturally this verdict created a great excitement in the city when it was given to the public, through the medium of the evening newspapers.

And on the next day the morning journals gave a deal of space to the affair.

New York is a big city, and it takes a big sensation to stir the metropolis to its center, but when the news got abroad that one of the money kings of New York, a man worth two or three millions, had been strangled in his own house, right in the heart of the city, and there was not the slightest clue to the doer of the deed, the people of the metropolis were wonderstruck.

Why had Arnold Haversham been killed?

Of course there must be a motive for so foul a deed.

The lawyers who had attended to Haversham's business for the last ten years made a careful examination of the papers in the safe, and declared that as far as they knew there wasn't anything missing.

Then, too, in one of the drawers in the safe there were Haversham's diamond studs, and a solitaire diamond ring, the stones well worth a couple of thousand dollars.

It was certain that no robber, who had killed the old man that he might plunder his safe, would have neglected to secure a haul like this, particularly as the drawer was half-open, so that the jewels could have been easily found.

Was the assassin, then, a mortal foe who took vengeance into his own hand?

And if this was the solution of the mystery who was the desperate man who had thus boldly dared the gallows that he might enjoy the satisfaction of taking the life of the man he hated.

So much excitement did this mysterious murder cause, that even the great head of the metropolitan police force, the august superintendent, was moved to take an active interest in the matter.

He sent for Inspector Grimshaw and Detective O'Callahan for a consultation.

"We must find this murderer!" the superintendent declared.

"The reputation of the entire force is at stake!" he continued. "Have you made an investigation as to whether Haversham had any bitter personal enemies?"

"Oh, yes, we went ahead on that track right in the beginning," Inspector Grimshaw answered.

"Any results?"

"No, nothing that amounted to anything," Grimshaw answered.

"We found that Haversham has been the controlling spirit of some big operations in cotton, whereby a lot of other men have been ruined, and some of the sufferers have been uncautious enough to say that Haversham was no better than a highway robber, and that he ought to be killed, but it appears to have only been just talk."

"No woman in the case?" the superintendent suggested. "Haversham was rich, and a widower; these old fellows are fine prey for adventuresses, who usually have pals, desperate enough to do a deed of this kind."

"We went on that tack too, but were not able to make any discoveries."

"No will was found, and the lawyers are of the opinion that he never made any, for he never said anything to them about one," the superintendent observed in a reflective way.

The inspector nodded. He understood in what groove the mind of his chief was working.

"The property all goes to the daughter, Miss Victorine Haversham," the superintendent remarked.

"Have you looked into the character of this young lady?"

"Yes, sir, she is apparently all right," the inspector replied.

"No love affair with some man whom her father wouldn't have at any price?"

"No, nothing at all suspicious about the girl," was the inspector's reply.

"Well, we must keep our eyes open, for it will be a decided set-back to the department if we don't nail the man."

Then the superintendent had all the detectives attached to the Central Office summoned, and gave them a long lecture upon the necessity of discovering the doer of this terrible crime.

The sleuth-hounds all promised to do their best, but as Inspector Grimshaw remarked, after they had left the superintendent's office:

"It is all very well to say that we ought to nab the man, but when there isn't a single clue to go on, how can we do the job?"

For a week the entire detective force of the Central Office gave their undivided attention to the Haversham case, but not the slightest progress did they make.

It was a most mysterious case!

CHAPTER VII.

FOUND AT LAST.

It is one in the morning, and a grand masquerade ball, given by one of the great German societies at the Madison Square Garden, was at its height.

The "fun" at a ball of this kind in the metropolis never begins until after midnight.

The festivities are supposed to commence about ten o'clock, but it is not until near the hour of twelve that the floor becomes at all crowded.

Then the theaters are out, the performances in the concert gardens over, the gilded youths and gay old bucks, who are fond of such amusement, hasten to the hall, for not until late do the performers, actors and actresses, dancers and singers, make their appearance on the floor.

On this particular occasion, the Bessie Manchester Comic Opera Troupe was well represented.

There were forty-odd people in the company, and twenty of the forty were present.

Miss Manchester was there in person, dressed as a Flower Girl, and escorted by Captain MacIverson, who had donned a simple domino and mask.

The *prima donna* was out of sorts, and after dancing twice with the captain and once with the jovial Englishman who managed the troupe, she told the captain she was tired and wished to go home.

"So soon?" MacIverson exclaimed. "Why, the ball has just commenced!"

"I know it, and although as a rule I always enjoy myself splendidly at an affair of this kind, yet, some way, to-night I am out of sorts."

"That is strange!"

"Yes, there seems to be a weight upon my heart, and if I were a believer in presenti-

ments I should be led to imagine that some misfortune was about to happen to me."

"Ah, you are only tired out!"

"Well, I don't know; and then something odd happened to-night which annoys me."

"Yes?"

"There is a tall gentleman here, wearing a black domino and mask, who seems to be watching me."

"Nothing odd in that!" the captain replied with a laugh. "You look charming in that costume, and it is not strange that men should gaze upon you in admiration."

"Yes, but this man doesn't act as men usually act in such circumstances."

"Indeed?"

"My mask became unfastened so that he had a glimpse of my face a moment ago, and the instant he saw it he started as if he had received an electric shot, clapped his hand to his head, and, I think, uttered a groan, then hurried away."

"This is a regular romance!" the captain exclaimed, evidently paying but little heed to the recital.

"I have not seen him since, but I am sure he is watching me from a distance, and I cannot bear it. I must go home!"

"All right! don't worry! I will get a carriage and put you in it," the captain said.

"You can go home alone?—you do not need me to accompany you?"

"Oh, no, stay and enjoy yourself. It will only take me five minutes to get home."

"Very well!"

MacIverson gave the *prima donna* to the care of the manager and hurried off to find a carriage.

In five minutes' time he was back.

The *prima donna* was provided with a dark water-proof cloak, and when she donned this garment, drawing the hood over her head, her fancy costume was completely concealed.

But as she had to run the gantlet of a crowd of idlers, congregated by the doors of the Garden, she retained the mask upon her face.

A half a dozen, or more, of the enterprising New York newspapers had already given her picture to "an admiring world," and she knew she would be sure to be recognized by some of the rabble if they got a chance to see her face.

The actress had a furnished flat in one of the cross streets leading from Broadway, and in six minutes after leaving the masquerade ball she was at her own door.

As her meals were supplied by a caterer, she was only obliged to keep a couple of servants, her maid, who had been with her for a number of years, and a middle-aged woman, a cross between a housekeeper and a maid-of-all work.

As the *prima donna* had anticipated remaining at the ball until three or four in the morning, she had instructed the servants not to sit up for her.

Being provided with a latch key, she was enabled to gain admission into her apartment without any difficulty.

But after entering the room, as she turned to close the door, she was surprised by the appearance of the stranger in the black domino and mask who, at the masquerade ball, had caused her considerable uneasiness by his peculiar behavior.

The English girl was no coward, yet there was something about the man which caused her to shrink from him in terror.

She had cast the cloak aside upon entering the room, and now in her pretty masquerade dress, a very butterfly of fashion, the actress started like a guilty thing as she gazed upon the intruder.

"Although your face is hidden by a mask, yet I know you. Many years have I searched for you in vain, but I have found you at last!" the stranger cried, and there was a menace in his tones.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TALE OF THE PAST.

For a full minute the *prima donna* shrunk from the man, and then, with a great effort, she summoned all her courage, drew herself up to her full height and exclaimed:

"What do you mean, sir, by intruding into my apartment in this manner? Begone at once or I will call my servants and have you given into the hands of the police!"

"Do you intend to defy me?" the intruder asked, speaking with the stern tones that a judge would use in addressing a convicted criminal.

"If you do not immediately depart I will most certainly summon my servants and have them call the police!" Miss Manchester exclaimed.

"This is mere bravado on your part; unless indeed the lapse of years has caused you to forget me, but I do not think that can be possible."

"I do not know anything about you, sir, nor do I wish to know. All I ask is for you to depart as speedily as possible. This intrusion is most unwarrantable, and unless you have a desire to find yourself in the hands of an officer you will take yourself off."

"You must not make the mistake of thinking that you are dealing with a defenseless and unprotected woman, for it is not so," the *prima donna* continued, endeavoring to assume as spirited a tone as possible.

"Although I am a stranger in this country, yet I have plenty of friends—men of power and influence, who will be glad to take my part if I am attacked!"

"I had an idea at the beginning that it might be possible that you had not recognized me, but from this language I see that I was mistaken: you know who I am well enough," the intruder remarked, shaking his head in a grave way.

"No, sir, I do not know anything about you!" the *prima donna* cried.

"Oh, yes you do! But I should not have recognized you if the mask had not happened to drop from your face, although ever since the day when I came back to my home in England and found you had disappeared I have made a practice of frequenting public places, and attending amusements of all kinds, going on the idea that sooner or later I would encounter you."

"The chance for which I looked came to-night. The moment your mask dropped, so that I had an opportunity to see your face, I recognized you, although you have changed considerably during the years which have elapsed since our last meeting."

"Others recognized you, too, and they called you by name, so that, without being obliged to go to the trouble of questioning any one about the matter, I was informed of who and what you are; therefore I am in possession of all the facts, and I think I can give an accurate guess in regard to your past career."

"But it is rather awkward for us to converse with masks upon our faces, so let us remove them."

And, suiting the action to the word, the stranger took off the mask.

It was Doctor Ambrose Valentine.

For a moment the woman hesitated, and then, with an impetuous motion, she almost tore the mask from her face.

Miss Manchester was deadly pale; her eyes shone with an unnatural light, and her bosom heaved convulsively, showing that she was laboring under strange emotion.

The doctor surveyed her for a moment, an inquiring gaze upon his stern and resolute face. She met the look with a defiant air.

"You have indeed changed a great deal; the girl has grown into the woman, and most certainly you have decidedly improved, but if the alteration had been ten times as great, I would not have failed to recognize you," Valentine remarked.

"For the last time, sir, I ask you to depart!" the *prima donna* exclaimed, endeavoring to repress the emotions which caused her to tremble with excitement.

She wished to appear calm and dignified.

"No, madam, I will not leave you until we have had a full discussion of the past."

"Do you wish to force me to send for the police?" Miss Manchester exclaimed.

"Ah, but if you are wise, you will not do anything of the kind," the doctor replied, apparently not in the least disturbed by the threat.

"Suppose that you do carry out your threat," the doctor continued, in his grave way.

"Suppose I refuse to go, and you send for the police. When the officer arrives it will not take me long to explain matters to him."

"I shall simply say," "This woman is my wife; years ago in England she betrayed the confidence which I reposed in her and fled from me."

"Now, by accident, I meet her in New York, and I desire her to give me an explanation, for I am anxious to know why she deserted the man who, from the time he first encountered her, did everything in his power to make her happy."

The eyes of the woman sunk under the calm and steady gaze of the doctor.

"Of course I am aware that it is not exactly the proper thing to call upon a lady at such an untimely hour as this, but a husband who unexpectedly encounters his runaway wife may be pardoned for not standing upon ceremony, and under such circumstances as these it is the most natural thing in the world for him to seek to gain speech with her as soon as possible."

For a few moments the *prima donna* pondered over the situation, her eyes bent upon the ground, and it was evident that she was greatly puzzled how to act.

At last she raised her eyes, and, with a resolute look, exclaimed:

"Perhaps it is better for both of us that we should have a full and free explanation, so be seated."

And she waved her hand to a chair.

"Thanks! and permit me to observe that, in my opinion, you are wise to come to this conclusion," Valentine remarked, as he sat down.

The *prima donna* sunk into a chair, plainly nerving herself for a disagreeable experience.

"I am glad to see that you are wise enough not to attempt to deny that you are my runaway wife," the doctor continued.

"Martha Swendlehurst, the English girl whom I married in the city of London, the seamstress, has been transformed into Miss Bessie Manchester, the popular comic opera *prima donna*."

"I am familiar with your career since adopting the stage life, for I read the account of an interview which one of these marvelously enterprising New York reporters secured with you, and during your conversation with him you told the story of your life."

"The account was well written, and I read it with interest, never suspecting though that it was the tale of the woman for whom I was searching so eagerly."

"Of course you gave but a brief account of your life before going on the stage, so there wasn't anything in the recital calculated to make me suspect that you were the woman of whom I was in search."

"I will not attempt to deny that I am the girl whom you married in England, and it is true that after you left me in London, when you went on your trip to India, I seized upon the opportunity to escape from the bonds which had become hateful to me!" the *prima donna* exclaimed, impetuously.

A look of amazement appeared upon the doctor's face.

"You astonish me," he remarked, slowly. "We always got along all right together, and you certainly acted like a devoted wife."

"Yes, I was a child and did not know my own mind!"

"Remember the circumstances which brought us together. I was living with my father, who was a poor, weak wretch, a perfect slave to liquor."

"By dint of the hardest toil, working from morn to night, I managed to earn a bare living; then he fell sick, and a good-hearted neighbor called you in to attend to him. I told you frankly, right at the beginning, that I feared I would never be able to pay you, and you, in the most generous manner possible, replied that I need not trouble myself about that."

"Then when my father died, and I, worn out, sunk under the strain, you took care of me."

"Yes, I had learned to love you," Valentine replied. "But even if no sentiment of that kind had grown up in my heart, I would not have seen you suffer, after the heroic struggle which you had made in behalf of your unworthy parent."

"Mind you, Martha, I am not claiming that this act of mine entitled me to any particular praise, for as I had more money than I knew what to do with, my father having

left to me, his sole heir, a vast estate, the trifle which I spent on you was a mere drop in the bucket to me."

"I accepted your aid because I could not help myself!" the *prima donna* exclaimed.

"And then when you talked to me of love I was weak enough to believe that the gratitude which I felt would in time ripen into a stronger passion, and so I consented to become your wife, but I had not been married to you a month when I woke to the consciousness that I could never love you as a wife ought to love her husband, and the bonds which bound me to your side soon became most dreadful to me."

"This is very strange," the doctor remarked, a grave look upon his face.

"You have taken me completely by surprise," he continued. "I had no idea that you felt in this way, and most certainly I did all in my power to make you happy."

"Oh, yes! I have no reason to complain of your treatment, but we were not suited to each other; day by day my position became more uncomfortable, and I soon woke to the consciousness that if I was forced to live with you as your wife I would soon grow to hate you."

"Is it possible?" Valentine exclaimed with a deep sigh.

"It is the truth!"

"What a relief to you my departure to India must have been."

"Yes, it was, and soon as you were fairly on the sea I took measures to make our separation a final one."

"You had left me plenty of money and I did not hesitate to use the funds to accomplish my purpose. I knew that I acted meanly, but I was desperate."

"Then I made the discovery that I possessed natural gifts which would enable me to make a living on the stage, and as soon as possible I came to this country for I knew that here I could get a divorce."

"Ah, I see; and you have procured one?"

"Yes! and you no longer have a claim upon me," the *prima donna* exclaimed with a defiant look.

"We were married in England and these American divorces are not valid there."

"Yes, I am aware of that, but the divorce is good in this country, and as I never intend to return to England that fact does not trouble me. I am a free woman as far as you are concerned, and I trust that as you now understand exactly how I feel about the matter you will go away and be content to allow our lines of life to be apart in the future."

"As far as you are concerned I am satisfied, for I am not the kind of man to force a woman to live with me after she has told me that she does not love me."

"I am glad that you take so sensible a view of the matter!" the actress exclaimed, evidently feeling much relieved.

"But I am not disposed to permit myself to be wronged with impunity," Valentine declared, and there was a peculiar menacing glitter in his eyes as he spoke.

"As you know I am a Southerner, a native of the State of Texas, and we men who are born in the South are inclined to take vengeance into our own hands when we are wronged."

"I am not a simpleton, and you must not make the mistake of taking me to be one," he continued, his voice stern, and his manner grave.

"Human nature I have studied, and so it is easy for me to conjecture that you did not discover that it was not possible for you to live with me until you happened to meet another man who suited you better."

"You procured a divorce from me that you might marry him, and although you pose as an unmarried woman, yet that is a trick which appertains to the stage life which you follow. I fancy though that it will not be a difficult matter for me to find the man, and when I do find him he will have to answer to me for stealing my wife away."

The face of the *prima donna* wore a troubled expression.

"It would be better for you to forget me altogether!" she exclaimed.

"Perhaps, but vengeance I must have. I will not trouble you again though," and then the doctor took his departure in a most abrupt manner.

CHAPTER IX.

PROMPT ACTION.

For a good ten minutes after Valentine's departure, Miss Manchester remained seated with her gaze bent on the floor, deep in meditation.

Then, abruptly, she sprung to her feet and began to pace up and down the room.

"I did not anticipate that he would take this view of the matter!" she exclaimed.

"It was my idea, when I discovered who he was, that we would have a stormy interview; then when I told him that in the future our paths in life would be separate, and he found I was resolute about the matter, he would depart, fearfully angry, of course, but unable to do anything; this resolution, though, on his part, to take vengeance upon the man whom he believes to be responsible for my leaving him, is a complete surprise."

"What shall I do?"

And the *prima donna* pressed both her hands to her throbbing temples as she put the question.

"He means what he says—it is no idle threat, and the quicker preparation is made to baffle his design the better!"

Having come to this conclusion, Miss Manchester proceeded to wake up her maid.

Polly Dawson, the girl was called—a strong, hearty English lass, with rather a homely face, but one full of good nature.

"Polly, I want to send a message to Captain MacIverson; he is at the masquerade ball at the Madison Square Garden; you know where that is—only six or seven minutes' walk?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Would you be afraid to go?"

"Oh, no!"

"It is not a suitable time for a girl to be out on the street, but there isn't much danger of any one troubling you."

"I would just like to see anybody try a game of that kind!" the girl exclaimed, with a toss of her head.

"I have a good strong pair of hands of my own, and I would soon warm the chops of any fellow impudent enough to trouble me!" the girl continued.

"Oh, yes, there isn't any doubt but what you can take care of yourself, for as you have been a lady's maid to actresses for the last three years, you have got used to being out late at night."

"Yes, and I don't mind. If a girl goes straight on about her business she is not apt to be molested."

"As I said, I have got a good pair of hands, and a tongue in my head, too, and if I once began to screech I think that I would soon raise the neighborhood."

"Ay, yes, and the most impudent of men would be glad to take to his heels!"

"I'll warrant you!" the girl declared, with another saucy toss of the head.

"I want you to tell Captain MacIverson that I desire to see him as soon as possible."

"You wish him to come immediately?"

"Yes, I will sit up for him, and I would be very much obliged if he would return with you."

"I will be sure to tell him, Miss Bessie."

Then the girl put on her hat and cloak and departed.

The *prima donna* sunk into an easy-chair and gave herself up to deep and earnest reflections.

The interview with the doctor had opened her eyes to the fact that she did not know as much about the man as she thought she did.

He had always been rather cold and silent, a great student and a hard worker, this from choice, for as the death of his father had left him independently wealthy he was not obliged to toil; but that he should suddenly develop into a messenger of vengeance was something surprising.

"A man such as he is would be apt to be a dangerous foe," the *prima donna* mused.

"The cold and quiet men are much more to be dreaded when they are once roused to action than the passionate and hasty ones, for they are usually tenacious, and not to be turned from their designs until the end is reached."

"I sadly fear that this man is destined to cause us much trouble."

The actress shook her head sadly, and she pondered upon the subject until her meditations were interrupted by the arrival of the maid and Captain MacIverson.

Polly discreetly retired to her own apartment after introducing the captain.

MacIverson fixed an inquiring look upon Miss Manchester, as he helped himself to a chair.

"I suppose that something out of the common is up or you would not have sent for me in such a deuced hurry," he remarked.

"Yes, that is true; the presentiment which haunted me at the ball that danger threatened was not without foundation."

"Aha! something has happened, then?"

"The man that I spoke to you about, who seemed to be keeping a watch upon me, and who started in apparent surprise when the dropping of my work afforded him a view of my face."

"Yes, I remember."

"He followed me from the garden and managed to gain an entrance here."

"Well, well, I am surprised!"

"It was my former husband, Ambrose Valentine!" the *prima donna* announced.

"I was prepared for that statement by what you said about the man's behavior at the ball, although as you hav'n't heard anything of him for some years, I had about come to the conclusion that he was not likely to trouble you."

"By the by!—come to think of it—I wonder if this old-time husband of yours, Ambrose Valentine, is not the Doctor Valentine who took part in the inquest held upon the dead millionaire?" the captain exclaimed, abruptly.

"I don't know, but I should not be surprised, for he is a doctor."

"When I read the account of the proceedings, I noticed that the name was the same, but as I hadn't any idea that your husband was in this country, or was ever likely to come here, I gave no thought to the matter."

"He is an American, you know."

"Is he? Really, I had forgotten that fact."

"Yes, he is a Texan."

And then Miss Manchester related the conversation which had taken place between herself and the doctor.

The doctor knitted his brows and shook his head in a thoughtful manner.

"You are right!" he exclaimed. "Your presentiment did amount to something."

"Do you agree with me that this man is likely to prove a dangerous foe?"

"Oh, yes, not a doubt about it!" the captain replied in a decided way.

"He has plenty of money and nothing to do, but as he is one of those sober and serious men who are never contented unless they are driving at something, he undertook the study of medicine in order to employ his time, and now that he has made up his mind to discover the man who persuaded you to leave him it is certain, in my opinion, that he will transform himself into a regular detective."

"Yes, I think you are correct."

"And there is no doubt that he will not leave a stone unturned to get at the truth."

"But do you apprehend that he will succeed?" Miss Manchester asked, anxiously.

"No, I do not think he will be able to make any discoveries if we play our cards rightly."

"You can rely upon me to do exactly as you say."

"Oh, yes, I know that. You are a good, obedient girl, and since we have joined our fortunes you surely have not lost anything by playing your game according to my ideas."

"Oh, yes, I know that!" the *prima donna* exclaimed, quickly.

"I am aware that I owe all my success to your advice."

"At first though when I suggested that it would be advisable for us to keep the fact of our marriage a secret you were rather inclined to rebel."

"Yes, that is the truth," the actress admitted, frankly. "My love for you was so great that I wanted all the world to know that you were my husband."

"I knew that it would be a mistake to make the matter public. I felt certain that you were going to make a success on the stage, and there is a large and influential body of amusement-seekers who take a deal more interest in an unmarried actress than they do in one incumbered with a husband."

"That is true. I did not think so in the

beginning, but now I am satisfied that it is correct, absurd as it appears."

"It is one of the peculiarities of human nature," the captain observed, in a cynical way. "I have always made it a rule to calculate closely about things of that kind, so as to act accordingly, and now that this affair has happened I think you will admit that I showed a great deal of wisdom in keeping the fact of our marriage a close secret."

"Yes, it was a wise conclusion on your part."

"Not a soul suspects that there is anything in common between us, for I have not even posed as a devoted admirer," MacIverson declared.

"We have indeed acted most prudently, and although all of my intimate acquaintances understand that we are good friends, yet there are half a dozen gentlemen whom I apparently regard with more favor than I do you."

"Yes, that is the truth, and I flatter myself that it will not be possible for this avenger to get upon the right track—most certainly it will not if we act with common prudence."

"Oh, we must be very careful!"

"We will be!" the captain assented. "Of course it will be the most natural thing in the world for this sleuth-hound to pitch upon the man who is apparently your favorite as being the party of whom he is in search, and just at the present Jack Haversham occupies that position."

"Yes, and it is a mystery to me why you wish me to encourage that young man."

"Well, I had a well-defined game in view," MacIverson answered, in a reflective way. "But the unexpected death of his uncle may force me to change my plans materially."

"I wanted to get the young fellow in my power, and I was succeeding most admirably when this sudden death of the millionaire occurred," the captain continued.

"It was through me that the old Jew, Goodschild, came to lend him the money which he advanced, and it was I who contrived the arrest at the Academy of Music so as to force him to get the money from you."

"You see, I was playing an exceedingly deep game, but the way things have turned out I don't know but what I am only going to have my labor for my pains."

"I never trouble myself to examine into your plans," the *prima donna* remarked. "I am content to carry out your wishes to the best of my ability."

"You are a good girl, and since we have been together I have never had the slightest complaint to make in regard to you."

"You are always ready to obey orders without questioning why they are given, and that is the proper way to act, for in good time I always explain."

"In this case there is another woman, the daughter of the man who died so suddenly, and as there are two or three millions of dollars in the family, if I can work my game successfully I may be able to pick up a big stake."

"I am content to obey blindly, without asking why or wherefore," the actress declared.

"You see, my dear little girl, if I can only succeed in making a big haul, I can take you off the stage, and on the continent of Europe we can settle down to pass the rest of our days in peace."

"Oh, that will be delightful!" Miss Manchester exclaimed, her face lighting up.

"I will do my best to bring it about, but I must be going now, for we both need a little sleep."

Then the captain took an affectionate farewell and departed.

CHAPTER X.

THE PIRATE BLOODHOUND.

AMBROSE VALENTINE was one of those "old young men," who usually proceeded in a methodical way.

So, after leaving the apartment of the *prima donna*, he went back to the Madison Square Garden and rejoined the friends with whom he had come to the ball, Mr. Clark, the undertaker, and a couple of his acquaintances.

The doctor's absence had not been noticed, and none of the party were led to suspect by Valentine's manner that anything out of the common had happened.

The four remained at the ball until about three in the morning and then departed for their homes.

Valentine had resolved upon a plan of action, and when he reached his own room sat down to smoke a cigar and meditate a little before going to bed.

"Possibly it was not wise for me to announce to this faithless creature what I intended to do, for my warning will serve to put both her and the man of whom I am in search on their guard, and so make my task a much more difficult one."

"But I have always fought in the open, and perhaps it is just as well that the pair should understand what they may expect."

"I will surely succeed in time in discovering the man who is responsible for the woman's actions, and until the discovery is made both the pair will live in a fever of apprehension."

And the doctor smiled grimly as he reflected upon the matter.

"Now then, how had I better proceed?"

He mused for some time over this question, and then put his thoughts into words.

"In the first place I will go among the theatrical people, and from their gossip I may be able to obtain the information that I seek, then at the same time I will engage the aid of one of these private detective agencies, and have the woman 'shadowed'."

"My instructions to the head of the bureau will be to gain all the information that can be possibly got in regard to the past career of this woman, and it will be strange indeed if I do not learn what I wish to know."

Then the doctor finished his cigar and retired to rest.

As it was past four when Valentine went to bed, he did not get up until late, and after breakfast he consulted the advertising columns of one of the morning newspapers.

Only one private detective agency had its card in the journal, and after the doctor had made a note of the address he sallied forth.

He proceeded to Broadway, and at the corner newspaper-stand bought another journal, with the idea of getting at the location of more firms in the detective line.

As he turned away from the stand he was accosted by a well-dressed man, whose prominent features plainly showed that he was a Hebrew.

"My dear doctor, I want you to give me a pointer about this murder case!" the Jew exclaimed.

"I will do anything I can for you," Valentine replied, rather surprised by the abrupt greeting.

"Allow me to give you my card," the stranger remarked, tendering the bit of paste-board.

But though the Hebrew was a stranger to the doctor, he is not to our readers, for it was the Russian Jew, Michael Orloff, the private detective, who figured in the first chapter of our tale.

"Michael Orloff, Cosmopolitan Detective Agency, Vanderbilt Building," said Valentine, reading the inscription upon the card, and then he exclaimed, abruptly:

"Why, you are just the man I want to see, for I have a little business in your line."

Orloff's card was the one which Valentine had read in the newspaper.

"Indeed! is that so? I am very glad to hear it!" the Jew declared, rubbing his hands together in a manner indicative of great satisfaction.

"Suppose you come with me to my office; it is only a few minutes' walk, and there we will be able to converse at our leisure."

"Yes, I will do so," the doctor answered.

Then the two proceeded down Broadway.

"You must really excuse my accosting you so abruptly," Orloff remarked in his smoothest way. "But I happened to come upon you unexpectedly and I really spoke before I thought."

"That is all right, and any information that I can give you I will be pleased to furnish."

"This mysterious murder of the old cotton-broker promises to be one of the celebrated cases of New York," the private detective explained.

"I should imagine so."

"Altogether there is fifteen thousand dollars' reward offered for the apprehension of the murderer."

"That is a sum well worth trying for, and I presume the offering of such a reward will put every bloodhound in the city on the scent."

"Oh, yes, every man who has ever done a bit of detective work will be anxious to collar such a sum as that, but it is not going to be an easy piece of work to bring the crime home to the man who did it, I fancy."

"The mystery does seem to be an extremely deep one."

"Yes, it certainly is as difficult a case as any one that I ever had anything to do with since I went into the detective line!" the Jew asserted in a positive way.

"And I can tell you too, doctor, that I have had a deal of experience in the detective business, for I was employed by some of the best detective agencies in London, Paris, and other large European cities."

Then Orloff went into particulars regarding the numerous firms for whom he had worked, and cited some of the cases wherein he had played an important part. According to his statement he had displayed remarkable detective ability.

In this way the time was occupied until the office of Orloff was reached.

After the pair had entered the office and were comfortably seated, with their cigars lighted—the Jew had tendered his visitor a cigar, with the remark that it was a smuggled Havana, and about as good as anything that could be bought in New York unless a fabulous price was given—Orloff began the conversation by saying:

"Now, sir, if you will have the kindness to explain the nature of the business which you want me to undertake I shall be pleased to do what I can for you."

"Do you know anything about this Miss Bessie Manchester who is the star of the comic opera troupe at the Academy of Music?"

"No, I can't say that I am particularly well posted in regard to her," the detective replied in a thoughtful way.

"I have a general knowledge of the party, of course, that is, I have seen her perform, and have read stories about her in the news papers."

"Yes, I comprehend; you are in possession of information regarding the woman such as the general public at large possess."

"Exactly! that is just how the case stands."

"Well, I desire to obtain an accurate account of her life from the time she was eighteen years old."

The Jew took out his memorandum-book and made a note.

"Is that all?" Orloff asked.

"Yes."

"It ought not to be a very difficult matter to handle."

"I fancy you will find you are mistaken in regard to that after you get to work on the affair," the doctor observed dryly.

The other looked surprised.

"Oh, is there any reason why she should wish to conceal the particulars?" he asked.

"Yes, there is. I don't doubt that you will be able to get a full account, even if you went to the woman herself and asked for it, but the story will not be a true one."

"Of course, if she doesn't want the truth known, it would be a bad blunder to allow her to know, or even suspect, that any one was looking into her past life."

"That is correct," the doctor affirmed.

"And now that you may know exactly how to proceed, I will give you the facts in the case."

"Ten years ago, in London, England, I married a girl of eighteen, named Martha Swendlehurst."

"Yes, sir—Martha Swendlehurst," and Orloff nodded as he jotted down the particulars in his memorandum-book.

"She was a poor girl, having a hard time to make a living, while I was a rich man."

"When I married her I knew there wasn't much love on her side, but was in hopes it would come in time."

"Six months after my marriage, I was called to India on business. Before going, I deposited a large sum of money, for the use of my wife, in the bank."

"After arriving in India, I wrote to her;

no answer came; thinking the mails were to blame, I wrote again, and again; then, fearing something was wrong, I wrote to the bank where the money had been deposited, and received a reply that my wife had drawn out all the cash within a month after my departure."

"Well, well, that was a rum go!"

"I hurried back to England, but could not find any trace of my wife, although I employed the best detectives that money could procure."

"Since that time I have traveled all over the world, going wherever my fancy prompted, but always keeping on the watch for my missing wife, for I felt sure that some day, sooner or later, I would meet her again."

"That thought was realized here in New York, for this stage woman, who calls herself Bessie Manchester, is my wife."

"Yes, I suspected it would turn out in that way."

"There is an old saying, you know, 'Look for the woman!' when any trouble occurs," the doctor remarked, in his dry, peculiar way.

"Ah, yes, and it is a very true one too, I judge, as far as my experience goes," the Jew declared with a grin.

"In this case it is altered a little, for it is 'Look for the man!'" the doctor remarked, grimly.

"You think then that some man induced your wife to go away?"

"Yes, I do not think there is a doubt about it, for since coming to this country she has secured a divorce from me, and if there had not been another man in the case she would hardly have gone to that trouble."

"That seems likely. Have you seen her?"

"Yes, and told her what I thought, but she denies that it is the truth."

"That was not wise, for now she will be on her guard," Orloff declared with a shake of the head.

"Well, the wisest of men make mistakes sometimes."

"Very true. All right! I'll do the best I can, and now can you give me a clue so I can get at the man who killed old Haversham?"

"Possibly; he was strangled from behind as the Thugs in India strangle their victims."

CHAPTER XI.

THE TALE OF THE THUGS.

"Ah, yes, the Thugs," the Jew remarked in a meditative way. "I have heard of those chaps but I do not know much about them."

"They are a peculiar religious sect, which at one time had quite a following in India."

"The members worship a goddess who craves human victims as sacrifices, and the misguided wretches believe they are securing a safe passage to Paradise by killing any unfortunate soul who is not one of themselves," the doctor explained.

"Yes, yes, that is just what I thought. I see that I had the right idea about the matter," the Jew remarked.

"It is one of the cardinal principles of these peculiar people never to shed blood, for it is their belief that a victim killed in any other way than by strangulation would not be acceptable to their great mistress."

"It is the queerest kind of a religion that I ever heard of in my time!" Orloff exclaimed with a wise shake of the head.

"Going on this idea the Thugs usually strangle their victim with a silken noose, and one of the names by which the fanatical band are known is the 'Brothers of the Silken Cord.'"

"Yes, I have read stories of their doings, where they were called by that name."

"But some of the old Thugs, men who took pride in counting their victims by the dozen, became so expert in their trade of death that they usually strangled their victims with their own sinewy fingers."

"Horrible wretches!" the Jew exclaimed in a tone of deep disgust.

"The English Government has been doing its best, ever since it got the native rulers under control in India, to exterminate these ruthless assassins who commit murder in the name of religion, and have succeeded so well that the sect is almost extinct."

"And served them jolly well right too, I say!" the detective exclaimed.

"During the years I spent in India my attention was directed to the Thugs, and as I have a liking for the morbid and the horrible, I took pains to learn all the particulars I could about them, and so I acquired a knowledge of their practices."

"The old Thugs, the chiefs of the different bands who prided themselves upon their ability to strangle their victims with their bare hands, had a peculiar way of performing the feat."

"It was their custom to always approach their victim from behind, clasp their hands around the neck, pressing the thumbs in on each side of the Adam's apple." And with his own hands on his throat Valentine gave an example of how the deed was done.

"Yes, yes, I see!" Orloff exclaimed. "And I can just tell you, doctor, I wouldn't like to have a man try any game of that kind on me, no, sir!"

"I have been through the experience and so can speak of my own knowledge."

"You don't mean it?"

"Yes, it is a fact," the doctor responded. "It was during the third year that I was in India."

"It was in the hot season, and I was up in Hills, the guest of a shooting-party composed of English officers."

"One day I became separated from the rest, lost my way in the jungle, and finally came upon the ruins of a temple."

"A cooling stream gushed out from the ruins, and I sat down upon a grassy bank near the streamlet to rest for awhile with my back against a small tree."

"Although I had no suspicion of the fact, I had come upon the secret haunt of one of the old Thugs, a gray and wrinkled murderer, whom the English authorities had been hunting like a wild beast."

"Overcome by the heat I fell into a doze, and the Thug, observing me, crept from his lair, and, approaching me from the rear, attempted to strangle me, but the fact that my head rested against the tree prevented him from getting a good grip on my neck, and as I was a light sleeper I awoke the moment his fingers clutched my throat."

"I don't wonder at that!" the Jew exclaimed. "Such a little surprise-party as that would be apt to awake the soundest kind of a sleeper."

"Thanks to the tree interfering with his grasp, I was able to break loose, and as the English officers happened to come up just at that time, the man was captured without difficulty. I may remark in passing that the Government gave him a short shrift, for he was hanged in a month."

"Served him right, too—the murdering villain!" Orloff exclaimed.

"Although the fellow did not get a fair chance at me, yet I bore the marks of his fingers on my throat for a week, so you see I am qualified to speak as an expert in regard to strangling."

"Yes, I should say so."

"Well, the marks on the throat of the murdered man were exactly like the ones on mine after my experience with the Thug," the doctor declared.

"And the conclusion to which I have come in this matter is that the old gentleman was attacked from behind and he was choked to death by the Thug's grip," Valentine continued.

"Of course, the murderer may have seized him by accident in this way, but I do not think, although it is possible, that it is probable, and if I were in your position, a detective, anxious to discover the doer of the deed, I would search for a man who knows the murder trick of these dusky Hindoo stranglers."

The Jew detective meditated over the matter for a moment, and then he shook his head.

"I am very much obliged to you, doctor, for this pointer, but I don't think it will do me much good, all the same," Orloff observed. "To hunt up a man who is up to this strangling dodge, in a big city like New York, is like hunting for a needle in a bundle of hay."

"That is certainly true, but in case suspicion is directed against three or four different parties, and you could ascertain that one of them had been in a position to learn how

the strangers murdered their victims, you would be safe in coming to the conclusion that it was probable that he was the murderer."

"That is so," she Jew assented. "And, as you say, this knowledge might put me on the right scent."

"That is all the information that I can give you in regard to the matter," the doctor remarked.

Then he drew out his wallet.

"Ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty," he said as he selected five ten-dollar bills from his roll, while the sharp eyes of the Jew detective sparkled.

"There is fifty dollars as a retaining fee," the doctor observed as he handed the money to Orloff.

"You will find me a liberal paymaster and I shall not grudge the giving of a good price if you can succeed in securing the information which I desire."

"Much obliged!" exclaimed the Jew as he pocketed the money, a grin of satisfaction upon his face.

"I don't see any reason why I can't do the trick up brown, for I don't believe that it will be a very difficult matter for me to find out what you want to know," Orloff declared in a confident manner.

The doctor shook his head.

"It is my opinion that you will have more trouble in getting at the facts than you anticipate," Valentine observed as he rose to depart.

"I may be in error in regard to this though and I trust that I am," he continued.

"When you wish to communicate with me, call, or drop a line to the care of Mr. Clark, the undertaker, at whose house I am staying."

"All right, sir," responded the Jew as he escorted the visitor to the door.

"I will go right to work on the job. You can depend upon that, for I am not the kind of man to allow the grass to grow under my feet."

After the door closed behind Valentine the detective resumed his seat with a chuckle of satisfaction.

"Aha! that is the kind of customer I like to run across!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER XII.

A SUGGESTION.

ORLOFF felt extremely well-satisfied with the result of his interview with the doctor.

"If I handle this matter in the right way I ought to be able to get a good bit of money out of it."

Then he took up the morning newspaper and his gaze fell on an article which said that the downtown associates of the murdered cotton broker had held a meeting and resolved to offer a large reward for the apprehension of the murderer.

"That is it!" Orloff cried. "Let them put up a purse of five or ten thousand dollars, and then there will be work done!"

At this point the Jew's meditations were interrupted by the appearance of a visitor.

It was Captain Dudley MacIverson.

"This is Mr. Orloff?" said the captain, with a polite bow.

"Yes, sir, at your service; pray take a chair."

The captain seated himself, and then, with a peculiar, meaning smile, said:

"I think I have had the pleasure of seeing you before—in Paris?"

"Yes, I believe so," replied Orloff, slowly, just as if he was a little apprehensive of what was coming.

"We were both of us rather under a cloud at the time," the captain remarked with a light laugh.

"Yes," spoken very slowly.

"You know who I am, Dudley MacIverson, formerly a captain in the service of her Britannic Majesty, an officer and a gentleman, although I was obliged to sell out of the English Army, on account of a little trouble with a brother officer, not unconnected with card-playing."

"Ah, yes, I have heard you spoken of as being one of the most inveterate gamblers in Europe."

"Correct! gambling is my passion, and I am never so happy as when seated at a table with the painted pasteboards before my eyes, and the musical chink of gold and silver

coins in my ears!" the captain declared, his face lighting up with enthusiasm.

"And this deuced gambling is always getting me into trouble, too," the captain continued, with a grave shake of the head.

"On this occasion that I speak of in Paris, a young lordling, who was a perfect donkey, took it into his head that I was cheating at cards, and was fool enough to make the assertion publicly."

"I called him out, and although he tried to avoid fighting, on the ground that I was a common blackleg, he finally had to toe the mark, so I had the satisfaction of shooting the young ass."

"I remember, but his friends made so much row about the matter that you were forced to leave France."

"Yes, his people had influence with the powers that be, and the police escorted me to the frontier, dismissing me with the polite intimation that I must never return to France again."

"Ah, well, there are other places in the world besides France!"

"Oh, yes, and, if I remember rightly, you had a little trouble with the police on account of some forged notes which you handled, and also because it was strongly suspected that you were a German spy."

"You were in the Parisian Secret Service, and were accused of selling Government secrets, I believe, and as your delicate sense of honor was touched by such monstrous accusations, you judged it wise to emigrate without taking the trouble to tell any one where you were going," and then the captain laughed, as though he considered the matter to be extremely funny.

The Russian Jew squirmed in his chair in an uneasy way, forced a laugh and replied:

"It was an unpleasant subject, and as I had enemies who were trying their best to ruin me—men in power with influence—I considered it best to get out of their reach."

"Yes, yes, it was the easiest way undoubtedly. Of course, friend Orloff, you understand that I shall not mention a word of this little matter, and I trust you will be equally discreet in regard to my small trouble."

"Oh, captain, you can rely upon my discretion!" the Jew declared, evidently relieved by the words of the other.

"And now to business, for I didn't call upon you merely to talk over old times. Does this Haversham case interest you at all?"

The quick eyes of the captain had noticed the bold display-line, "The Haversham Mystery," which headed the article that Orloff had been reading.

"Oh, yes, in my line, you know."

"But until a reward is offered there will not be any inducement for you to take hold of the matter?"

"Not unless there is a chance to make some money out of it."

"Exactly! Well, it is certain that the brokers are going to offer a good reward—it will hardly be less than five thousand, and then the daughter is going to offer ten thousand."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Orloff, rubbing his hands together gleefully.

"Yes, there will be fully fifteen thousand dollars to be won."

"Ah! that is a sum worth working for."

"Certainly, and I think I can give you a pointer in regard to the man who did the job."

"Can you?" Orloff cried, eagerly.

"Or, if I can't fix it so you can put your hands right on the man, I can cut and contrive so there will be a chance to make a good bit of money out of the affair."

"Ah, yes, yes! I will be ever so much obliged, and you shall have a fair share too, if you can put me in the way of making a good thing."

"Of course; I shall expect that. You see, friend Orloff, I happen to be the bosom friend of Jack Haversham, the old man's nephew."

"Yes, I understand, I have read of him."

"And, being on the most intimate terms with this young man, I am possessed of some information which I think you can turn to advantage."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the Jew, all eagerness.

"Now, then, I will state a supposititious case, and you analyze it."

Orloff nodded assent.

"Jack Haversham is the old man's nephew, and his principal clerk, but the young fellow has no favors shown him, with the exception of being permitted to live in the Haversham mansion. His salary is small, and his position important."

"In the same house is the girl, Victorine, the undoubted heiress to all the old man's wealth; what is more natural than a love affair between the two, and Jack, knowing that the old man would never consent to such a union, in his desire to gain the girl and greed to secure the fortune, might employ a tool to kill his uncle."

"He didn't do it himself, for he was at the Academy of Music that night," Orloff observed slowly.

"But you know that, for you were there."

"Oh, yes, he has a strong *alibi*, and was it not so arranged on purpose?"

"Perhaps, and the young man was in the hands of the money-lenders too," the Jew observed thoughtfully.

"Yes, he was in difficulties from which a single desperate blow would relieve him."

"But how to find the man who did the work?"

"Keep a watch on Jack! Shadow him! And if he is too sharp for that game, if the man cannot be found, then we must find a man who will be willing to declare that he was paid by Jack to do the deed."

"Ah, yes, I see! a little bit of blackmail!"

And the Jew grinned.

"Yes; if the young man is guilty, he will pay us to keep quiet. If he is innocent, and inclined to be defiant—will not pay to avoid scandal—we must work on the girl."

"The idea is a great one, and it will be wonderful if we don't make some good money out of it!" the Jew declared.

"Go ahead on this line and shadow him," the captain remarked, rising. "And I will do all I can to discover some facts which will aid us."

"If you need to communicate with me, I am stopping at the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

"All right. I will remember."

And then the captain took his departure. Orloff meditated over the matter for a few moments.

"Really, I ought to be able to make a good stake out of this affair," he mused.

The sounding of the telephone bell interrupted his meditations.

"Hello!" he responded to the call.

"Is this Mr. Orloff?"

"Yes, all right!"

"This is Mr. Oliver Dalrymple, Cotton Exchange. I would like to see you in my office, as soon as possible, on important business."

"I will come immediately! Good-by!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A HORRIBLE SUSPICION.

ORLOFF seized his hat and hurried out.

"Blessed if this isn't going to be a lucky day for me!" he exclaimed, as he descended to the street.

"Here I have collared fifty 'cases' in one haul, with the prospect of more to follow, from the same party, and now comes in a summons from old Dalrymple."

Dalrymple is the President of the Cotton Exchange, and he was the chairman of the meeting of the cotton brokers when they decided to offer a reward of five thousand dollars for the apprehension of the murderer of their late associate, Arnold Haversham, and as the management of the affair was given into his hands, the chances are great that he wants to consult with me about the matter."

"He is one of the liberal fellows, too, who believes in encouraging a man with a good fat fee in advance, so I am pretty safe to pick up another fifty."

And going on this idea the detective was extravagant enough to hire a cab in order to be able to reach his destination more quickly.

In due time he arrived at the cotton-broker's office, and when he gave his name, was at once ushered into the presence of the great gun of the Cotton Exchange.

Oliver Dalrymple was a man of sixty-five, a hale, hearty old gentleman, although both his hair and beard were snowy white.

He came at once to business.

"Mr. Orloff, I presume you have read in the newspapers that the cotton-brokers have offered a reward for the apprehension of the murderer of Arnold Haversham?"

"Yes, sir."

"I want you to try your hand at the case."

"I will be glad to do it, sir."

"If you succeed in nabbing the man you will get the five thousand, and also ten thousand dollars more offered by Miss Victorine, the murdered man's daughter."

Orloff nodded assent.

"I don't mind telling you, Mr. Orloff, that I have a great deal of faith in your detective ability, and that is why I am anxious to have you take hold of the case."

"You flatter me, sir," the Jew responded with a low bow.

"A man ought not to speak in his own praise," Orloff continued. "But I will make bold to say that since I have been in the detective line in New York I have met with considerable success, and that I always try to do my level best, no matter what the case may be."

"Yes, yes, I am quite satisfied in regard to that, and as an inducement to you to do your best I have consulted with my associates and they have authorized me to pay you for all the time you put in on the case even if you do not succeed."

"That is extremely liberal on your part," the Jew detective declared with another polite bow.

"And I give you my word of honor, sir, to do all I can."

"Now, Mr. Orloff, I am going to have a consultation with the superintendent of police in regard to this matter, for we cotton-brokers do not intend to leave a stone unturned to secure the arrest and punishment of this bloodthirsty assassin."

"That is a good idea, sir, for the police are apt to do a deal better work if there is somebody at their elbows urging them on."

"It is only natural, you know—human nature!" the old gentleman responded, in his brisk way. "As it happens, I have been able to be of considerable service to the superintendent in certain political matters, and therefore he is anxious to do all he can to oblige me."

"Now I think it would be a good idea for you to be present at this conference."

The Jew shook his head.

"I really am not certain about that, sir," Orloff remarked.

"You know, Mr. Dalrymple, there is an old saying about two of a tradeseldom agreeing, and the regular official detectives do not have much liking for us gentlemen in the private line."

"Yes, yes, that is only natural, of course," the old gentleman assented. "But I will tell you how we will fix it."

"You go with me, and remain in the carriage while I ascend to the superintendent's office."

"I can suggest to him that I have employed you on the case, and think it advisable to have you present at the consultation. If he doesn't object, I can send for you."

"Yes, I should think that will work all right. I don't see why it shouldn't."

"Let us be off, then!"

The cotton-broker's carriage was in waiting, and soon the pair were on their way.

They conversed upon different subjects during the ride, none of which are of interest to our readers.

In due time they arrived at Police Headquarters, and as Mr. Dalrymple had written to the superintendent in regard to his call, he was immediately ushered into the presence of the police chief.

The usual salutations were exchanged, and then the cotton-broker explained the object of his visit, adding that he had the private detective, Mr. Orloff, retained in the case, and gave his views in regard to a consultation.

The superintendent shook his head.

"You don't approve of his coming into the case?" the cotton-broker asked.

"Dalrymple, you and I are old friends—we have done a deal of business together, so I am not going to beat about the bush with you!" the police chief declared.

"As a rule I do not take any stock in these private detectives."

"I am ready to admit, you know, that there are a few good men in the business, but there are a lot of them who cannot be trusted."

"You surely do not put this Orloff in that class?" Dalrymple asked in surprise.

"He has done work for me and certainly performed it in a satisfactory manner."

"Oh, yes, I do not doubt that. I am not saying anything against the man's ability, for from what I know of him I think he is a pretty smart fellow, but I will say to you frankly that I doubt his honesty—this is in strict confidence between us, of course," the superintendent added, quickly.

"Of course."

"And there are few men to whom I would speak as freely, for I do not want to do anything to injure the man, but as you have consulted me about the matter I am going to give you my opinion frankly."

"That is right."

"As I said, I do not place any trust in this man, for I regard him as a sharp and unscrupulous fellow."

"For instance: if he was engaged on a case, and made some important discoveries, he is just the sharper to go to the party on whose track he was, and try to get him to pay hush-money."

"Ah, yes, I see," the cotton-broker remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"You regard him as being likely to betray his employer, if he thought he could make more money by so doing."

"Yes, that is exactly the opinion I have of the man."

"But in this case there wouldn't be any chance for him to try a game of that kind," the old gentleman argued.

"Well, at present it doesn't seem as if there was," the police chief observed, in a thoughtful way. "But as this is a very complicated case, there is no telling what may happen."

"However, as you are desirous of letting this man try his luck, I will not stand in the way. Let him join in the consultation."

"You understand, I presume, Dalrymple, that I have not spoken against the man because I am afraid he may capture the reward," the superintendent added.

"The money doesn't come into the question at all, for by the rules of the Department the officers are not allowed to accept personal rewards."

"Yes, yes, I understand."

"I will send for Orloff to come up, and in order to do all I can for you, I will give him my ideas in regard to this matter."

"Thanks! And I assure you I will be glad to return the favor, if it is ever in my power, and I do not doubt that it will be some day."

"Oh, that is all right!"

A messenger was dispatched for the private detective, and in a few moments he entered the apartment.

He greeted the superintendent respectfully, and took the arm-chair into which the police chief waved him.

"Now we will come right down to business," the superintendent said.

"Mr. Dalrymple has explained to me that he has engaged you to work up this Haversham murder case and requested me to help you all I can."

"I shall be much obliged if you will be good enough to advise me," the Jew remarked in servile humbleness.

"And as Mr. Dalrymple and myself are old friends, I am going to do what I can for him," the police chief continued.

"At present the case is a blind one, for as there is not a single clue to the doer of the deed, we can only proceed upon surmise."

"Yes, a very difficult case," the Jew detective remarked with a weighty shake of the head. "And I must admit that I do not see where to begin to work it up."

"In all cases of this kind the old rule is to seek for the motive of the murder," the superintendent explained.

"But in this affair there does not seem to be any motive," the old gentleman urged.

"Very true!" exclaimed the police chief.

"Apparently it was not robbery—that is, Mr. Haversham was not killed by a burglar who had broken into the house for the purpose of robbing it, for, as far as can be discovered no valuables were taken, and it is

certain that the house was not forcibly entered; then, too, house-breaking crooks are not in the habit of getting in their work until the wee small hours of the morning, so I have dismissed the surmise that professional crooks had anything to do with the matter."

"He might have been killed by some desperate personal enemy," Orloff suggested.

"Yes, but the closest investigation has failed to reveal that he had any such thing, and if the deed was done by a personal enemy how did he gain admittance to the house?" the official asked.

"He could not have got in unless he had been secretly admitted by one of the inmates," Orloff observed.

"That is correct, and this seems to suggest that some one in the house had a hand in the murder," the superintendent remarked.

"Now, then, we hark back again to one of the old rules," the police chief continued in an impressive way.

"Who profits most by the death of the man?"

The old cotton-broker looked grave, while the Jew detective nodded his head sagely and blurted out:

"The daughter, Victorine, the heir, who inherits all of the vast estate!"

"Exactly!" the superintendent responded.

"But surely, my dear sir, you cannot have the horrid suspicion that this young girl can have had a hand in her father's death?" Mr. Dalrymple exclaimed, deeply distressed.

"It seems to be almost impossible, I know, but the annals of crime contain many such instances," the official replied.

"As soon as the investigations satisfied me that the crime must have been committed by, or with the aid of, some one in the house, I caused a close scrutiny to be made of all the inmates," the superintendent continued.

"But the closest examination failed to bring to light a single suspicious circumstance connected with any one."

"The servants were all right, from the highest to the lowest, apparently."

"Then I turned my attention to the relatives of the dead man. There were only two in the house, the daughter and the nephew."

"The nephew, Jack Haversham, is a decent sort of fellow, without any bad habits, as far as could be discovered, but the daughter is peculiar in some ways, mannish in her tastes, fond of dogs and horses, very much at home in the stables and given to solitary rides."

"Though a millionaire's daughter, she has turned a deaf ear to all her suitors and had no lover, apparently; but is it not possible that she had made the mistake, as wealthy girls often do, of falling in love with some man, so inferior in position that she knew her father would never consent to her marriage?"

"It does not seem to be possible!" Mr. Dalrymple exclaimed.

"The history of the police courts are full of such instances," the superintendent replied.

"The lover may be a crook—a desperado; the girl introduced him into the house; perhaps the old man discovered them together, and then the tragedy occurred," the official continued.

"Or the lover may have planned to kill the old man, so that he could get the girl, and she may be innocent of any guilty knowledge."

"Let us hope, for the sake of humanity, that this is the truth!" Mr. Dalrymple exclaimed, in a fervent manner.

"Yes, I hope so," the superintendent replied. "But in a case of this kind we must take all theories into consideration."

"So, Mr. Orloff, if you want my opinion in regard to the matter, I will say, keep your eyes on the daughter!"

From the way in which the official spoke the visitors understood that he had said all he had to say, so they took their departure.

As they descended the stair the old gentleman asked:

"Do you believe that it can be possible?"

"Almost all things of this kind are possible," Orloff replied, in a diplomatic manner.

"It will not do any harm to test the theory, even if it is not correct."

"I hope to Heaven it will not be!" Dalrymple cried, as he parted from the Jew.

CHAPTER XIV.

KILL THE DOG.

AFTER the cotton-broker was driven off in his carriage, the Jew detective proceeded slowly toward Broadway, stroking his chin with the fingers of his right hand, a sign with him that he was indulging in deep reflection.

"Can it be possible that the superintendent has hit on the true solution of the mystery?" he murmured to himself, unable to resist the temptation of putting his thoughts into words.

"He has a keen scent when it comes to a matter of this kind, and can see as far into a millstone as any man that I know of on either side of the herring-pond.

"And his conclusion exactly agrees with that of Captain MacIverson.

"MacIverson is a humbug, I know, a regular sharper, and perhaps worse; but, if he is, he has always managed matters so skillfully that the police have never been able to nab him.

"That does not prove that he isn't a rogue, of course, for, as a rule, the big and artful rascals manage to slip through the meshes of justice's net, even if the smaller scoundrels are caught.

"It is vastly strange that this old and experienced man of the world and the veteran thief-taker should both jump to the same conclusion!

"Isn't it likely that the captain knows more than he has revealed to me?"

And the Jew detective pondered upon this question for a moment.

"He and Jack Haversham are great friends, and the young man may have made some incautious remarks which gave the captain an idea of what was going on.

"If the theory is a true one, I am ahead of the police, for while they only suspect that the girl may have a lover, I know that she has one; and what is more, I know who he is!"

And then a chuckle of delight escaped from the thick lips of the Jew.

"Alas! if this thing is managed rightly, it will turn out to be a fortune!" he declared.

"I don't know how it is, but the scheme did not make much impression on me when the captain told me the details; it wasn't until to-day that I comprehended what a magnificent bit of business it is," the Jew detective continued, with a beaming smile on his fat face.

"Fifteen thousand dollars' reward is offered for the capture of the murderer!" he muttered.

"Bah! what is a paltry fifteen thousand dollars? If the thing is properly arranged—properly nursed, it ought to be worth ten thousand dollars apiece both for the captain and myself for the rest of our natural lives.

"I think there are certain places in Europe where I could live very comfortably if I had an income of ten thousand to support me.

"The captain will have to come in for his whack, of course," Orloff continued in a reflective way. "And why shouldn't he? It is only right. If it was not for him I would not be in possession of the knowledge which has given me the inside track in this business.

"Oh, no, it wouldn't be fair to try to cheat the captain out of his share, and besides, from what I know of the man, I fancy it would be a mighty dangerous bit of business.

"The chances are that the captain has a gang at his back, for a man of his sort never stoops to do any dirty work, but always has some common scoundrels under his command who attend to that sort of business for him, and if I should attempt to trick the captain the chances are great that some of the gang would put me in such a condition that the good things of this world would interest me no more.

"Oh, no, the captain must have his share all right!"

And then a thought came to the detective.

"Why shouldn't the captain be able to help me on this other business?" he exclaimed.

"He is no end of a swell, and is always hand in glove with all the actresses and singers.

"It was the same way over in Europe too. I remember that in London and Paris he al-

ways had the *entree* behind the scenes, and was hail-fellow-well-met with all the stage nobles.

"He is the very man to give me the information about this Miss Bessie Manchester, and if he doesn't happen to know, the chances are great that he can easily find out from some one that does.

"I will hunt the captain up at once! I have seen him at the Fifth Avenue Hotel and in the Hoffman House saloon a half a dozen times, and the chances are that if he is not in either place I will be able to run across him on Broadway."

Acting on this idea Orloff took a Broadway car and rode up-town, to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, where he alighted.

Fortune favored the Jew detective, for as he got off the car he caught sight of Captain MacIverson, proceeding leisurely up Broadway, having just come out of the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

Orloff hastened his steps and speedily overtook the captain.

"I would like to have a few words with you in some private place, where we can talk without danger of being overheard," the Jew detective remarked, after exchanging greetings with MacIverson.

"Come to my rooms; I have furnished apartments on Twenty-fifth street, only a few steps away, and we can talk there to our hearts' content, without apprehension that any eavesdropper will be the wiser."

"That will do admirably!" Orloff replied.

"I am always particular when I talk business, to make sure that my conversation cannot be spied upon," the Jew continued, as the two turned into Twenty-fifth street.

"You are prudent."

The captain had two handsome rooms in one of the old-time elegant mansions, the lower parts of which are now given up to business purposes, and the upper stories rented to a dozen different tenants.

The front room the captain used for a reception-apartment, while the rear one was his sleeping-chamber.

"You are very comfortable here," Orloff remarked, as he sunk into the easy-chair to which the captain waved him with his hand.

"Oh, yes, it is not at all bad," MacIverson responded, as he seated himself.

"It does not cost any more than a room at a good hotel, and is much more convenient."

"Yes, in apartments like these a man can have all the visitors he likes, without any one being the wiser, and if some of the callers are a little off-color—men that a hotel detective would be apt to designate as crooks, and spot immediately—no one in a house of this kind would be likely to pay any attention to them."

Then the Jew winked in a knowing way, and indulged in a chuckle.

"That is correct, but I never have any such callers," the captain replied, with a smile of amusement.

"You might, though, and undoubtedly do, being in the detective line," MacIverson added.

"But come, fire away with your business, for time is flying and life is short."

"I have been thinking over that idea which you were kind enough to suggest to me the other day, and the more I think of it the greater becomes my impression that there is a deal of money in the thing if it is properly worked."

"That is my opinion."

"I will go half with you, of course, in all I get out of it."

"That is fair, and I will do all I can to make the scheme a success."

"Well, my idea is that the little hush-money plan is the one which will bring in the cash."

"Oh, yes, that is the game undoubtedly, but we must be very careful how we go ahead."

"Oh, yes, I understand that!" the Jew detective exclaimed, with a confident nod of the head. "You may rest assured that I shall proceed in the most careful manner. And now, my dear fellow, I think you can do me a service. I have received a commission to procure certain information, and if you will take charge of the matter, you can make a fifty-dollar note with very little trouble."

"Well, I don't mind; fifty-dollar notes come in very handy sometimes."

"It is right in your line, and you will be able to do it, I think, very easily," and the Jew took out his memorandum-book as he spoke.

"Information is required of the comic opera star now playing at the Academy of Music, Miss Bessie Manchester," Orloff remarked, consulting his book.

"Ah, yes, Miss Manchester, a very charming young woman; I have the pleasure of being acquainted with her," the captain observed, in a placid way, and without betraying the least bit of surprise.

"I thought it was likely that you might know her, for I knew that you were in the habit of mixing with these theatrical people."

"What information is wanted?"

"All about her life from the time she was eighteen, but particularly whether she has a lover, or a husband; in fine, find out if there is a man in the background."

"It will not be a difficult matter; but who wants this information?"

"Oh, come! I mustn't give my customer away!"

"What difference does it make?" the captain asked, apparently surprised.

"I will not betray the confidence, you know, and it is an awkward thing for a man to work in the dark."

Orloff hesitated for a moment, and then said:

"Well, I suppose there's no harm in giving up the name. The party is a doctor, Ambrose Valentine."

"I don't know him, but I will get the information for you as soon as possible."

A few more words and the Jew took his departure.

"The bloodhound is on the scent," the captain observed. "And when the beast gets too near, the best way to end the thing is to kill the dog!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE GANG.

"Yes, yes, that is by far the best way—kill the dog," the captain repeated, in a thoughtful tone, staring straight at the wall before him, with his brows knitted and an angry scowl upon his features.

"How lucky that I happened to meet with this foreign transplant—this graduate of Portland Prison and the galleys at Toulon," he continued, slowly.

"And how fortunate it was that I conceived the idea of forming a band, and instructed him to hunt up a couple of good men."

"Really, though, the idea was not mine but his, for he made the suggestion that we ought to be able to make some rich hauls if we worked together."

Then MacIverson consulted his watch.

"He will be here in a few minutes if he is on time, and I must be ready to receive him."

The captain rose, locked the door of the front apartment, and passed into the bedroom.

In the sleeping apartment was a closet, and in the back of the closet a secret door led into the adjoining room, which the captain had rented through an agent, so that if any inquisitive soul had made inquiries in regard to MacIverson, he could not have discovered that the gallant captain had three rooms.

Then, too, the visitors who, like the Jew, were introduced into the captain's spacious rooms, could not suspect that there was any way of getting out of the apartment excepting by the door through which they had entered, and any one whom the captain received in the single room could have no suspicion that MacIverson had other rooms in the building.

The third room was more plainly furnished than the other two, and was a compromise between a bedroom and an office, for the furniture included a folding-bed and a desk.

The folding-bed was in the shape of a wardrobe, and being placed against the secret door concealed it from sight.

It was provided with large casters so it was easily moved, and afforded no obstacle to the passage from one room into the other.

The captain had just seated himself when there came a knock at the door.

He rose, turned the key in the lock, and admitted the applicant.

The new-comer was a man of forty five

or thereabouts, a tall, slender, sober-looking man with a thin face which was smoothly-shaven, and as he was dressed in a well-worn black suit, he had the appearance of a poorly-paid minister or teacher who found it a hard matter to get enough to enable him to keep body and soul together.

It is a very old saying that appearances are deceptive, and most certainly they were so in this case, for this mild and meek-looking individual was a crime-hardened criminal, and as desperate a fellow as all the slums of Europe could produce.

His name was Timothy Hollencote; Skinny Tim was what he was usually termed though by his pals.

It is a habit of the professional rascals to apply nick names to each other, and the crooks are, as a rule, better known by such appellations than by the ones to which they are justly entitled.

"You are prompt," the captain remarked.

"Oh, yes, I always try to be on time when there is any business on hand," the crook replied.

His tones were low and soft; in fact he was "as mild-mannered a man as ever scuttled a ship or cut a throat," to use the old saying.

"I'll turn the key in the lock so as to make sure that we will not be disturbed by any callers," MacIverson remarked, suiting the action to the word.

"That is a good idea, for when a couple of gentlemen like you and I, captain, sit down to arrange a scheme, it is extremely disagreeable to be disturbed," and the speaker helped himself to a chair as he uttered the speech.

"Oh, yes, no doubt about it, but now we can speak freely without danger of interruption," MacIverson remarked, taking a chair.

"Well, I have succeeded in securing two good men," the crook declared in his soft, insinuating way.

"That is good."

"They are both first-class men, who can be depended upon to do a trick up in a workman-like manner."

"That is the kind I want!" the captain exclaimed. "The men must be up to the mark or else there isn't any use of our attempting to do business."

"Oh, yes, I know that, captain, by bitter experience," the old crook remarked with a wise shake of the head.

"On three different occasions in my professional experience I have been obliged to take in greenhorns for pals just because I couldn't get hold of the right sort of men to help me do the job, and I wish I may die if I didn't come to grief each and every time!"

"Yes, that is the usual result when a good, first-class schemer attempts to put a job through with incompetent men."

"In fact, my dear fellow, I would not try a game of that kind," the captain asserted.

"If the scheme was one that I could not work alone, and it was absolutely necessary to have help, if I couldn't get the proper kind of men I would not go into the matter."

"You are right, captain, but beggars can't be choosers, you know, and once in a while a man finds himself so hard pushed that he is obliged to try to take a trick, even though he can't arrange to do the job the way it ought to be done," the crook argued.

"That is so, no doubt about it!" MacIverson assented.

"Circumstances certainly do alter cases," the captain added. "There never was a truer saying."

"Well, the men I have picked up are first-class fellows, both of them from across the water, and as I have known them for years I know just what they can do."

"You were lucky to get hold of them. Who are they? I have a fair knowledge of almost all the prominent 'Greeks' in Europe, and am acquainted personally, or by reputation, with the majority of the men who have made names for themselves by showing their independence of the law, so it is likely that your men are not strangers to me."

"Number one is Adolph Langville, surnamed the 'Count.'"

"Ah, yes, I know the gentleman by reputation, although I never had the pleasure of meeting him personally."

"He is a fine, dashing fellow, who has been very successful in persuading people with more money than brains, that he is

really a member of the ancient nobility, and the heir to a great fortune, which, owing to adverse circumstances, he is not able to get at just at present," the captain remarked.

"That is the man, and I think we will find him to be a valuable fellow," the crook asserted, rubbing his hands softly together, and smiling in a benevolent way.

"Yes, I have no doubt of it; he is a famous card sharp, and a desperate fellow when it comes to weapons."

"Just now he is down on his luck, and being a stranger in this country is having a hard time of it, although he speaks good English, but you know in a city like New York there is not the chance for a man like the Count to pick up the loose coins as in the European towns."

"Very true, and I have no doubt he was glad when you suggested to him that he should join our organization."

"Oh, yes, he was delighted," the crook replied.

"Number two is a cove as equally notorious in his way as the count is in his," Skinny Tim continued.

"He is an Englishman named Hiram Doliday, and at home was usually called Old Hayseed, for he is a big, red-faced chap, and looks for all the world like a farmer who don't know enough to go in when it rains."

"I don't know the man," the captain remarked.

"He is a good one!" Skinny Tim asserted. "You can depend upon that, and his appearance is enough to deceive the keenest detective that ever walked in shoe-leather."

"Why, captain, Old Hayseed looks so innocent, and so green, that it don't really seem as if butter would melt in his mouth!"

"Yes, I should imagine he would be a valuable man," the captain observed, reflectively.

"Just the fellow to act as a decoy if we should need any work of that kind."

"I have no doubt that we can use him to advantage," MacIverson observed.

"It seems to me that this is a strong party, and we ought to be able to do some good work."

"Yes, that is my idea."

"You are in with the swells, captain, and can nose out the game, then arrange the scheme so we can do the work."

"That is the programme, and I have already picked out a victim."

"Good for you!" cried the crook, rubbing his hands together gleefully.

"The quicker we get to work, the better for all of us!"

"There is a man to be put out of the way," the captain explained.

"Oh, a job of that kind?"

"Yes; a certain party is willing to give a couple of hundred dollars, and then there is the chance of picking up a trifle more, for the man will be apt to have some money and jewelry on his person," MacIverson explained.

"Oh, yes, that is likely, and the two hundred alone will not be a bad haul if the job of getting at the cove is not too difficult."

"I think it can be easily arranged. The man is a doctor, a stranger in the city, named Ambrose Valentine, and he is staying with a Mr. Clark, an undertaker, who lives on Fourth avenue."

"Oh, I know the man!" the crook exclaimed. "That is, I know of him, if he is the same Doctor Valentine that figured at the inquest of this murdered millionaire, old Haversham."

"That is the man."

"I say, captain, you didn't have a hand in that job, eh?" the crook asked, inquisitively.

"No, I think from all appearances that it was a family affair. It is possible though that the man who is anxious to get the doctor out of the way had something to do with that affair, but I never trouble my head to ask questions of a customer, you know," the captain replied.

"All I look after is to see that the money will be forthcoming when the work is done," MacIverson added.

"That is correct."

"Now, the first thing for you and your companions to do is to see how you can best get at the man, then form a scheme to strike him."

"It will not take us long to fix that," the

crook replied. "Suppose I arrange to meet you here to-morrow night at nine o'clock?"

The captain agreed to this, and the interview came to an end.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MANNISH GIRL.

AND now we must introduce the reader to a character of whom considerable has been said, Victorine Haversham, the only child of the murdered man and the heir to all his great wealth.

She sat in the luxuriously-furnished reception-room of the Haversham Mansion.

In person Victorine was a tall, well-proportioned girl, with a clear red and white complexion, jet-black hair and eyes, and although her features were too irregular for her to be called a beauty, yet she certainly was far from being an ugly girl, although she was decidedly masculine in her appearance.

Among her acquaintances she was a general favorite, for she was a frank, open-hearted girl without the least trace of affectation.

The worst that could be said of her was that she was devotedly attached to dogs and horses, and delighted in all sorts of outdoor sports.

Being of a strong, resolute nature, she had borne up well under the great blow which had fallen so unexpectedly upon her.

Ever since the death of her father she had kept herself secluded, only receiving the lawyers and the business men who had been on intimate terms with the old cotton broker.

These gentlemen had called to see what would be done about the business transactions in which Mr. Haversham was engaged at the time of his death.

"Mr. Jack Haversham will attend to everything," the girl announced. "And all arrangements made by my father will be carried out."

To Jack she had said:

"Go on with the business and do the best you can. As soon as I have time to think the matter over we will arrange for the future."

At that time, although it was not known whether the dead man had left a will or not, yet it was surmised that will or no will, Miss Victorine would inherit the bulk of the property.

Then as time went on and a careful examination of the murdered man's papers failed to produce a will, it became manifest that, under the law, the girl would inherit all the estate.

When Jack announced this fact to her and asked for instructions, she replied that she needed time to think the matter over, and in a week or so she would hold a consultation with him in regard to the matter.

On the morning of the day on the afternoon of which we introduce Miss Victorine to our readers' notice, she had told Jack Haversham at the breakfast-table that when he returned home at the close of the day's business she would be prepared to talk to him.

And now she sat in the reception-room awaiting his coming.

The young man usually arrived at five o'clock, and on this particular afternoon he was prompt to the minute.

Victorine had told him that she would be in the reception-room, so he proceeded there immediately upon arrival.

"Well, how is business to-day?" the girl asked.

"Oh, about the same as usual," Jack replied, as he seated himself upon the opposite side of the window from where Victorine sat.

"We are not doing much," he continued. "For we are resting on our oars, so to speak, awaiting developments."

"Yes, I comprehend," the girl remarked, with a thoughtful expression upon her face.

"You are rather fond of a business life, ain't you?" she asked, abruptly.

"Oh, yes," he replied, carelessly. "I can't honestly say that I was at first, though, but I have got used to it now, and if I did not go to the office every day, I should hardly know what to do with myself."

"Habit has made it a second nature to you," Victorine said, with a smile.

"Yes, that is the truth."

"You have got along all right with the business since my father's death."

"Oh, yes," the young man replied, wondering at the question.

"For the last year, you know, your father trusted all the details to me, and all he did was to merely exercise a supervision."

"And you could carry on the business by yourself now without any trouble?"

"Certainly!—that is if I was possessed of sufficient capital."

"That is the very point upon which I am going to speak!" Victorine declared.

"I have been thinking over this matter, and have made up my mind to have the business go on as usual; you and I, Jack, will form a partnership. You will find the experience and conduct the business, and I will contribute the money; then we will divide the profits."

"I am very much obliged to you, Vic, and I will be glad to accept the offer, for you are practically giving me a fortune."

"Yes, and in a few years you will be independent of me, or of anybody else, for that matter," the girl observed.

"You see, Jack, I wanted to arrange the affair so you can feel as if you had a chance for yourself, and if you succeed that you are not indebted to any one."

"Of course I am a very rich young woman now, and I could easily make you a present of fifty or a hundred thousand dollars, without missing the money at all," she continued.

"That is very true, but I wouldn't like to take the money as a gift, even though you could spare it just as well as not."

"Yes, that is just what I thought, and as I wanted to do something for you I set my wits to work find a way."

"You see, Jack, I am satisfied that if my father had made a will you would have been remembered," the girl continued.

"I know that it was his intention to provide for you in a handsome manner, for he told me so a good two years ago," she added. "We had a conversation upon the subject a couple of months after you came to live with us."

"Father was a rather odd man, you know, took strange ideas into his head once in a while, and was very obstinate about carrying them out."

There was a slight embarrassment perceptible in the girl's manner as she spoke, and Jack Haversham, being a bright-witted fellow, came at once to the conclusion that the old cotton-broker had talked to his daughter in about the same strain that he had talked to him.

And then, acting on a sudden impulse, he made up his mind to ascertain whether this was the truth or not.

"I do not think there is any doubt that your father would have bequeathed to me a handsome sum if he had made a will, for he agreed to do so at the time he exacted a certain promise from me."

"Yes, he mentioned something about the matter to me," a slight shade of red making its appearance in her cheeks as she spoke.

"I think that I ought to make an explanation about the matter so you will understand my position, otherwise I may appear to you in a rather unfavorable light."

"Just as you like. I will listen to you, of course," Victorine answered, gazing at the young man with a peculiar expression in her eyes.

"I am going to speak plainly, although it is rather a delicate subject for both of us; the fact is your father got the idea that it was likely I might fall in love with you."

"Yes, he told me so, and I said it was absurd for I am not at all pretty!" the girl exclaimed, now blushing deeply.

"He spoke very sensibly about the matter, and for the first time revealed to me that I really had no claim upon him, as I was not his nephew, but a foundling."

"He had brought me up like a gentleman, and given me a fine education, but he was not willing that I should marry his daughter, so, as an inducement not to fall in love, he promised to remember me handsomely in his will."

"Really, though, Victorine, the bribe was not needed, for by appealing to my gratitude for the favors which he had conferred upon me, the same result would have been reached."

"Yes, of course, it was only natural that you should wish to oblige the man who had

done so much for you," the girl said, with a smile, attempting to laugh away her embarrassment.

"My father certainly acted very promptly," she continued. "For I don't think there was any indication on the part of either of us that we had fallen very deeply in love with each other, or were likely to do so."

"Decidedly not!"

"Father talked to me in the same strain," Victorine explained. "If I fell in love with you, he would surely disinherit me, and give all his money to orphan asylums, or something of that kind. Of course I was indignant. I was not one of the soft, silly kind of girls, apt to fall in love at all, and I told him plainly that if I had been inclined to be romantic, he was going to work in exactly the right way to make me believe I was desperately in love with you."

Jack Haversham laughed.

"Yes, it is a peculiar trait of humanity to wish to do that which is forbidden," he said.

"Well, as it happened, it did not act that way with us. I like you real well, of course, Jack," she remarked, with charming frankness. "And I am sure that I could not like you any better if you were really my cousin, but I do not believe I am the sort of girl to fall in love at all—unless, indeed, it is with a dog or a horse," she added, with a laugh.

"You will meet your fate one of these days, when the right man comes along!"

"Ah, yes, possibly, but I doubt it!" the girl declared, with a toss of her shapely head.

"But I say, Jack, why do you suppose father was so strangely obstinate about this notion?"

"On account of my poverty, or unknown birth, I presume."

"No, I don't think so, for he had a supreme contempt for people who boasted of how good their families were. He was a self-made man, himself, you know, and was proud of it."

"And then as far as money went, he has told me a hundred times that I would have so much wealth that I could afford to marry a poor man if I happened to fall in love with one."

"Well, if he held opinions of that kind it is rather odd," Jack remarked, thoughtfully.

"I was never backward in putting questions, you know, and so I promptly asked father why he objected to you."

"And what did he say?" the young man asked, much interested.

"He replied that there were good reasons why he did not wish me to marry you, and if I knew them I would never consent to such a union, but he would not explain further."

"Extremely mysterious, I must say."

"And now, Jack, I am going to tell you my idea about papa's death, for I believe it was due to accident."

CHAPTER XVII.

A RE-APPEARANCE.

JACK HAVERSHAM pondered for a moment over this disclosure.

"Due to accident?" he said, in a questioning tone.

"Yes, that is what I think, although I have offered a reward for the apprehension of the murderer," the girl replied.

"But I did that because the cotton-broker offered a reward, and I could see from the manner in which they spoke that they expected I would do something of the kind."

"Yes, it was a natural action under the circumstances," the young man observed.

"Now I will tell you why I have my doubts in regard to my father being killed by any one, and when I explain you will see why it is that I have hesitated to speak," Victorine remarked, slowly and with a grave look on her face.

"To speak necessitated an explanation in regard to my father's personal habits which would be extremely unpleasant to me," she continued.

"Father was thought to be a man of extremely correct ways of living, and it was only in the privacy of his own house, and late at night, after everyone had gone to bed,

that he overstepped the bounds of prudence in regard to the use of liquors."

"You surprise me," Jack observed. "I knew that he was partial to a glass of good liquor once in a while, but I had no idea that he indulged to excess."

"He did, and has for almost every night during the last two years. It was his custom to have his liquor, and a light lunch, brought into the library by the butler between eleven and twelve o'clock every night, and then Thomas went to bed."

"An hour later father followed, and as a rule, he was always so much under the influence of liquor that it was as much as he could do to get to his bedroom."

"I am amazed!" the young man exclaimed. "Here I have been living right in the house and never even suspected such a thing."

"By accident I happened to make the discovery, and ever since I have always kept on the watch, so as to be ready to assist father to his room, for I did not wish any of the servants to learn of his infirmity."

"Very natural, indeed, on your part," Jack remarked, with an approving nod.

"And sometimes, after I got father to his room, he would be seized with a violent attack, so as not to be conscious of what he was doing, and at such time he usually got the idea that he was strangling, and would make frantic efforts to remove his collar and necktie."

"As it happened, on the night when the tragedy occurred, I was interested in a book, and read until nearly half-past one before I became conscious of how late it was."

"Then I opened my door, listened for a few moments, and as all was still I came to the conclusion that father had got to bed safely, and so I went to my own."

"Yes, I do not wonder that you believed everything was all right."

"Father acted very cunningly about this matter. He never drank all the liquor that Thomas brought, but had a supply under lock and key in the library, so he could drink all he wanted without any one being the wiser."

"That was a sharp trick!"

"Now my theory in regard to his death is that he drank until he was overcome by the liquor, then had a violent fit, and made the marks on his neck with his own hands, in endeavoring to tear off his necktie and collar, and in his frenzy fell against the table, and the sharp edge of the marble inflicted the wound which produced his death."

"I know that I am going in opposition to the doctor's opinion," the girl hastened to add.

"The physicians believe that his death was caused by strangulation, although they admit that the wound in the temple was sufficient to produce death."

"I see, and you are going on the idea that the doctors have made a mistake," Jack Haversham remarked, thoughtfully.

"Physicians are only men, and all men are liable to be deceived," Victorine argued.

"Yes, there isn't any doubt about that."

"You can understand, from the peculiar circumstances connected with the case, why I hesitated to make my opinion public in regard to my father's death."

"I do not blame you for not making it known to the world at large," the young man remarked.

"And, really, despite the positive assertion of the doctors, it does seem as if there was a strong probability that you are correct in your surmise."

"I think so," the girl replied in a tone of conviction. "I shall not say anything about the matter though. The police seem to be very sanguine that they will be able to soon apprehend the murderer, but if they do not succeed in finding him then I will believe it will be because he does not exist."

"Oh, yes, that is the way the police always talk!" Jack Haversham exclaimed. "As the boys say, that is an old gag."

"It doesn't matter whether they have any clues or not, they invariably pretend that they have, and they are always just going to make an arrest," he continued.

"Woman-like I had to confide in somebody," Victorine remarked with a smile.

"And as I haven't a relative in the world I must make-believe that you are my cousin, even when I know you are not, so as to be able to relieve my mind."

"You will find that I will be as true and faithful to you as a brother could prove!" the young man declared.

"Oh, I put the most perfect trust in you!" Victorine replied with a confident smile.

"And speaking of relatives that reminds me of something!" Jack declared, abruptly.

"You made a mistake when you said that you hadn't a relative in the world, for I met your father's brother, your uncle, Colonel Jim Haversham, on the very night of your father's death."

"Is it possible?" the girl exclaimed.

"Why, I have not heard of him in years!"

"I fancy that my father and he were not on very good terms," she continued, reflectively. "For it is a long time since his name has been mentioned, and once—it is years ago—when, with girlish inquisitiveness, I attempted to question my father in regard to him, he replied, curtly, that my uncle was no credit to himself or anybody else, and he never wanted to hear his name again!"

"Yes, I am satisfied from the way in which your father spoke of the colonel in the office, when any old acquaintance inquired about him, that he did not have for your uncle the liking which one brother should have for another."

"Of course, I do not understand anything about the matter, for father was never willing to converse upon the subject."

"I was coming out of the Academy of Music when I was accosted by a man, well in years, who called me by name, and introduced himself as Colonel Jim Haversham," Jack explained.

"Although I have never met the colonel, or even seen a picture of him, yet, after I had taken a good look, I did not doubt that he was the man he represented himself to be, for he bore a striking likeness to your father."

"He walked up the street with me to Broadway, explained that he had just returned from India, and was going to a hotel for the night, preparatory to calling upon your father in the morning, and then he borrowed ten dollars of me, as he said he couldn't get his drafts cashed until morning," and a slight smile appeared on the young man's face as he spoke.

"Why, Jack, wasn't the man a swindler?" the girl exclaimed.

"Well, the idea came to me that he was, after he got away with my ten dollars, and I had time to think the matter over," the other replied.

"He has not called here," Victorine said, "for if he had I would have seen him."

"Yes, and even if he found some business waiting for him which required his immediate attention, so that he could not come to the house on the next morning, as he had said, he surely must have heard of your father's death during the next day, and that circumstance ought to have brought him immediately to the house."

"Oh, yes, and if he was the real Colonel Jim, he undoubtedly would have come."

"If he was an impostor, of course it was very natural for him to keep away after getting the ten out of me," Jack observed.

"If it was my uncle he surely would have come to the house as soon as he heard of the tragedy, unless, indeed, some accident happened to him."

"Yes, but it isn't likely that anything of that kind occurred," the young man declared.

As he spoke he happened to glance out of the window.

An exclamation of surprise escaped him.

"Here is the man now—he is coming in! Look and note the resemblance he bears to your father!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE COLONEL'S STORY.

VICTORINE glanced through the window.

The elderly gentleman, with the iron-gray hair, and the soldierly bearing, was ascending the steps.

"Yes, you are right," the girl assented.

"He does look very much like my father."

"You will see him, I presume?" Jack asked.

"Certainly!"

"I will bring him in!"

So it was the young man who answered the colonel's ring.

"Ah, my dear fellow, I am delighted to see you!" the veteran exclaimed, shaking hands with Jack in the warmest manner.

And now that the young man got a near view of the colonel's face he could see that the old fellow had altered considerably since the time of their first meeting.

Then his face was puffed out like a man who was a hard drinker, now it was thin and pale, and he had the appearance of a man who was not very well.

"I was wondering what had become of you and was just talking the matter over with your niece," Jack Haversham observed.

"Ah, yes, my dear Victorine! I caught a glimpse of her at the window as I ascended the steps, and I would surely have known her, no matter where I met her, on account of the resemblance which she bears to her mother!" the colonel declared.

Jack Haversham escorted the old gentleman into the drawing-room and introduced him to the young lady.

The colonel greeted her in the most affectionate manner, and repeated his observation in regard to the likeness which she bore to her mother. Then, after taking a seat in an easy-chair, he remarked:

"Well, my dear children, this is a terrible blow that has fallen upon all of us."

"Yes, sir," Victorine replied with a deep sigh while Jack assented by a nod.

"I was horror-struck when I heard the news, which did not reach me until to-day," the colonel explained.

The others looked the surprise which they felt at this announcement.

"And I presume, my dear Jack, that you have been wondering what had become of me?" the veteran continued.

"Well, yes, I was surprised at not seeing you," the young man admitted.

"I have been through a most remarkable experience!" the colonel declared.

"In fact, my adventure borders on the marvelous," he continued in an impressive way.

"After I left you I got on a car and rode up town."

"I was not feeling particularly well, for I had not been able to eat much of anything since leaving Chicago; in fact, I felt decidedly rocky, as the saying is, and the idea came to me that if I got a few oysters, and a little liquor of some kind, it would help me to brace up."

"So I alighted from the car, and, as a preliminary proceeding, went into a saloon to get a cocktail in order to prepare my stomach for the oysters."

"As it happened, there was a couple of Englishmen in the place, officers in the British Army, who were making a tour of the United States."

"We got into conversation; I happened to mention that I had just returned from India, and as they had also served in that country they greeted me as a brother-in-arms."

"That was natural," Jack remarked.

"Oh, yes; we went into a private room at the back of the saloon and had a jolly time."

"The pair were true Britons, very partial to brandy and soda, and as I am rather fond of that sort of tippie myself I drank a deal more than was good for me, considering the weak state of my stomach."

"The effect of this was to bring on a sick turn, so I excused myself to the two officers and departed in haste, with the idea of going to a drug-store that I might procure a dose which would give me relief."

"On reaching the open air I was seized with a sudden faintness."

"Two well-dressed gentlemen, noticing that I was ill, kindly offered to escort me to a doctor, and that is the last thing I remember—all became a blank!"

"It was truly unfortunate," the young man observed, and while the colonel had been telling his story the warning that Doctor Valentine had given concerning the veteran came to Jack's mind, and he saw how correct the doctor had been in his surmise.

"When I recovered my senses again where do you suppose I found myself?" the colonel queried.

The listeners shook their heads; the puzzle was too deep for them to solve.

"In the Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island!"

"Is it possible?" Victorine exclaimed.

while the young man by his face fully expressed the wonder which he felt.

"Quite possible, and extremely disagreeable, I assure you."

"I was very sick, very weak, and although I tried to make the doctors understand that I was not out of my mind, only sick and suffering, yet it took me until to-day to convince them that what I said was the truth."

"But how did it happen that you were committed to Blackwell's Island?" Jack Haversham asked. "You must have been brought before a magistrate for examination."

"The affair is wrapped in obscurity, of course, but as nearly as I can get at the facts it came about in this way," the colonel replied in a thoughtful manner.

"The two well-dressed men, who volunteered to take me to a doctor, were a couple of rogues who took me to some convenient place, and there robbed me of all my valuables, then left me, and the police, finding me wandering aimlessly around, placed me under arrest."

"I do not think there is any doubt that I was out of my head at the time," the colonel added. "For I do not remember anything of the matter."

"My insensibility was of the mind not of the body."

"Yes, I comprehend," Jack remarked.

"It is, apparently, not half so difficult a matter to get into a lunatic asylum as it is to get out," the colonel remarked.

"Anyway, it seemed so in my case, for there was a terrible amount of red tape to be undone before I procured my release," the veteran explained.

"I was committed under the name of John Smith," he continued.

"Not being able to give an account of myself when I was brought before the magistrate, some police joker gave the first name which came into his mind."

"I was not sorry that my real name was concealed, for I was anxious to keep out of the newspapers; I knew very well what mountains out of mole-hills the reporters make in a case like mine."

"So when I was asked my name I replied Thomas Brown, and explained that I was a stranger who had just reached New York when I was taken sick."

"I was released to-day, and while on my way to the city overheard a conversation between two of the officers relative to the Haversham tragedy, as they termed it."

"I questioned them, and was astounded upon learning the particulars."

"Then, upon reaching the city, I procured the newspapers so as to get all the details."

"It is a very sad and very mysterious affair," the young man remarked.

"I see the newspaper report to-day is that the police are working on certain important clues, and expect to soon be able to make some important arrests," the colonel remarked.

"But that is the same old story the police always give out in all these important criminal matters," he continued. "And experience teaches that there isn't much reliance to be placed upon the statements."

"That is just what I have been saying to Victorine," Jack observed.

"It is correct!" the colonel exclaimed, decidedly. "But then, you know, when the reporters are pressing the police for information it is only natural for them to give out a report of this kind."

"I do not have any idea that the detectives will succeed in finding the murderer, for it is my impression that my father's death was due to an accident," the girl remarked.

"That is not impossible, although the doctors decided to the contrary," the colonel observed in a thoughtful way.

"It is a remarkably strange affair, and the more it is reflected upon the greater becomes the perplexity," Jack remarked.

"There does not seem to be any reason why any one should attack Mr. Haversham," the young man continued.

"He had no personal foes—no malignant enemy anxious to take his life, and the theory that he was killed by desperate crooks, who had contrived to gain admission to the house, with the idea of plundering it, does not seem to be reasonable, as nothing of value is missing."

"You are wrong about that, for my brother's will has not been found," the colonel remarked.

The young people looked surprised.

"You didn't know that he had made one, eh?" the veteran continued.

"No, it was the opinion of his lawyers that he had not, for they had never heard him speak about the matter, and if he had made a will, the chances are great that they would have drawn out the document," Jack observed.

"The lawyers are not correct in regard to this!" the colonel declared in the most positive way.

"My brother drew out the will himself, for he had sufficient legal knowledge to execute a document of that kind as well as any lawyer living, and as the will was a peculiar one, he preferred to keep all the particulars to himself.

"He wrote me a full account of the matter to India," the colonel added. "And that is how I come to be possessed of the information.

"The will bequeaths his property to you, my dear Victorine, with the exception of a certain sum which is set aside to provide for the payment of ten thousand dollars per year to me, and five thousand per year to Jack here, but both these payments are only for the term of our natural lives, then the principal reverts to you and your heirs."

"Did father write that he had executed the will, or was going to do so?" Victorine asked, coming with a woman's shrewdness to the vital point.

"He wrote that he had drawn out the document, and signed it in the presence of two witnesses, as the law requires," the colonel declared, in the most positive way.

"Now where on earth are the witnesses?" Jack Haversham exclaimed.

"I should think, considering that in the newspaper accounts considerable stress has been laid on the fact that he left no will, the witnesses would have been quick to come forward and tell what they knew about the matter."

"It is a strange fact," the colonel remarked, with a shake of the head. "And the disappearance of the will is another!

"I presume a careful examination has been made of his papers, eh?"

"Oh, yes," the young man replied. "But no will has been found, nor even the draft of a will."

"It is an unlucky thing for me," the veteran observed. "The fortunes of war have been against me for the last few years, and I have returned to my native country poorer than when I left it; so you see, my dear Victorine, this little ten thousand a year would have come in very handy to keep me in my old age."

"Don't allow the absence of the will to worry you, uncle, for I will be only too happy to carry out my father's purpose!" the girl exclaimed. "You shall have your ten thousand a year, just the same as if the will had been found."

"My dear child, how can I ever sufficiently thank you?" the colonel exclaimed, his voice trembling with emotion.

"Don't mention it, uncle!" Victorine replied. "Really, it does not amount to anything, for I have more money now than I know what to do with."

"You are fortunate, my child, but I am glad of it, for I feel sure you will make a good use of your wealth."

Then it was arranged that the colonel should become Victorine's guest until he made arrangements to set up an establishment of his own.

The call to dinner ended the conversation, and after the meal was over, the colonel, pleading fatigue, withdrew to take a nap, while Jack took his way to his club, where he expected to meet some friends.

CHAPTER XIX.

A LEAF FROM THE PAST.

JACK HAVERSHAM proceeded to Broadway, and as he sauntered up the street, meditating upon the colonel's strange story, he came face with Doctor Valentine.

He had met the doctor at the time of the inquest, and the pair had exchanged a few words, so that each knew who the other was. The moment that Jack Haversham saw the

doctor, the thought came to him that it would be a good idea to tell Valentine how accurate his prediction had been in regard to the colonel.

So, acting on the spur of the moment, he accosted the doctor, and after the usual greetings were exchanged, remarked.

"Do you remember, doctor, our first meeting one evening on the corner of Broadway and Fourteenth street, when you kindly took the trouble to warn me in regard to the condition of an elderly gentleman with whom I had been conversing?"

"Oh, yes, I remember the circumstance."

"Well, sir, your estimate of his condition was singularly exact."

"Yes, I felt pretty certain about the matter, although of course a man does make a mistake once in a while in a prognostication," the doctor replied.

"The man was attacked just as you predicted."

"I am not surprised, of course, but I should like to learn the particulars of the case, if there is no objection to my doing so."

"Certainly not, but as this is a poor place for a conversation, suppose we drop into a little chop-house, around the corner, where we can get a glass of ale and talk at our leisure in a quiet corner."

"Yes, that is a good idea," Valentine replied.

The two then proceeded to the saloon which was one of the better class of English chop-houses.

At so early an hour in the evening business was not driving, and the pair had no trouble in getting a table where they could converse without danger of being overheard.

"It is a very strange case, doctor, and I do not wonder that you became interested in it," Jack Haversham remarked.

"And, by the way, this gentleman is a brother of the Mr. Haversham who came to his death in such a peculiar way."

The doctor was surprised by this information and said as much.

Then the young man related the strange story which the colonel had told.

"I was satisfied that he was on the verge of a severe attack," Valentine remarked in a rather absent sort of way, speaking like a man whose mind was deeply occupied.

"Colonel Haversham, you said his name was?" the doctor asked, abruptly.

"Yes, Colonel James Haversham."

"I knew of a Colonel James Haversham who was a soldier of fortune in India, in the service of some of the native princes."

"It is the fashion in India for the rajahs and begums to have a white trained soldier at the head of their military forces," the doctor explained.

"This is the man, for he has just returned from India, and from his statements it is evident that he did not do very well, although it is the common supposition that soldiers of fortune in a land like India generally succeed in feathering their nests pretty well."

"Yes, as a rule, they do, for their pay is large," the doctor observed.

And then he said, in a peculiar, abrupt way:

"Mr. Haversham, although I was a total stranger to you and your family, yet as I have become by accident acquainted with you and led to take an interest in your affairs, the thought has come to me that it is possible that an all-wise Providence has brought this condition of affairs about so that I would be in a position to give you some information which you ought to possess in regard to this Colonel Haversham."

"Possibly so," the young man assented, somewhat surprised by the speech.

"As you are probably aware there are only two of our name now, Miss Victorine and myself, and I am not really a Haversham by birth, or adoption, for although I was brought up by Mr. Arnold Haversham, he never legally adopted me."

"Yes, I comprehend."

"And we know very little about the colonel for he has been away for twenty years."

"His brother then was not in the habit of conversing in regard to him?"

"No, he never mentioned his name unless he was forced to by some one asking about him."

"It is apparent, then, that the brothers were not on good terms!"

"So it seems, yet the colonel declared that he corresponded with his brother," and then Jack related what the colonel had said about the will, and the decision to which Victorine had come.

"As I suspected, the hand of fate is in this affair!" the doctor exclaimed.

"Now, my dear sir, I am going to speak plainly, for I am satisfied that I was brought into this business for that very purpose."

"I am going to tell you what the reputation of this Colonel Haversham was in India, and then you can judge just how much reliance can be placed on any of his statements."

"I shall not be surprised to discover that he is not reliable, for I will candidly admit that the man has not made a favorable impression upon me."

"In India he bore a very bad name; he was addicted to liquor and also an inveterate gambler; then, too, he was concerned in some disgraceful affairs, but as he was cunning and unscrupulous he always managed to escape punishment, usually using some poor, weak wretch as a cat's-paw."

"During his stay in India, he was in the service of fully a dozen of the native princes, for he was not a man calculated to remain long under one flag."

"In some instances he was accused of having betrayed the prince whom he served, and it was openly charged that he had taken a bribe to allow the army which he commanded to be defeated by the foe with whom he was contending."

"That is an ugly accusation to bring against a soldier."

"The circumstances seemed to indicate there was no doubt that it was true."

"Then, after having quarreled with all his friends, he pretended to become converted to the native faith and took refuge in a temple, where it was said he intended to study for a priest."

"A man of marvelous changes!"

"And while the colonel was an inmate of the temple, it was robbed of its sacred jewels, and the priests had a suspicion that the colonel was in league with the robbers, so he was expelled."

"He didn't seem to get along anywhere."

"Then he gave out that he intended to write a book upon India, and he journeyed from kingdom to kingdom, ostensibly for the purpose of procuring information but after awhile the discovery was made that he was a spy in the service of Russia, paid to try and persuade the princes on the borders to league with the Muscovite, in the event of a war between England and Russia, and as he had at one time been in the English Secret Service, the British authorities looked upon him in the light of a traitor, and it was openly said that if they succeeded in getting him into their hands, they had certain charges to bring against him which would result in his being sent to jail for a lengthy period."

"I don't wonder that he found it convenient to return to his native land."

"This is the career of the man, and so you can judge that but little reliance can be placed upon his statements, particularly if his story was designed to benefit himself."

"The chances are then that there was no will, and consequently it could not have been stolen."

"There is no evidence that such a document was in existence but this man's word, and, as I have shown you, it is worthless."

"What do you think of this idea?" and then Jack told what Victorine thought about her father's death.

"The young lady is wrong!" Valentine replied in the most decided manner.

"Mr. Haversham was murdered!" he continued. "There is no doubt whatever about it! Of course I cannot say who committed the crime or why it was committed, and neither one may be ever discovered, but that does not alter the fact that the man came to his death by violent means."

"Possibly, in time, the truth will come out," the young man remarked.

This brought the interview to an end, and the pair departed.

At Broadway they separated, and as Jack Haversham walked up the street he pondered deeply upon the revelation which had been made.

Colonel Jim was a rascal, no doubt!

CHAPTER XX.

A MOMENTOUS INTERVIEW.

"THE old man has played a mighty good game—there is no mistake about that," Jack Haversham soliloquized, as he walked slowly up Broadway.

"By the aid of his cock-and-bull story about the will he has managed to secure the handsome sum of ten thousand dollars a year for the rest of his natural existence, so there isn't any reason for him to complain.

"Now then, shall I reveal to Victorine what the doctor has told me about her uncle?

Jack Haversham pondered over the question for some time.

"No, I don't think that it would be wise for me to do it at present," he said at last.

"Although she is a remarkably sensible and level-headed girl, yet she is inclined to be illogical, like the majority of her sex, and the chances are that she will not believe the tale.

"No, no, the best way is to allow things to go on. If the colonel is a thorough-going rascal, the chances are great that he will make a 'break,' as the boys say, before a great while.

"The couple of hundred dollars a week will give him an elegant chance to paint the town red, and he will be sure to avail himself of it.

"Then, if he gets into any scrape, and the news comes to Victorine's ears—and I will take mighty good care that it does, if I learn anything about the matter—I can tell her the story about her uncle's career in India, which the doctor has just told me."

After coming to this conclusion the young man fell to meditating about the mystery of Arnold Haversham's death.

"I think the doctor knows what he is talking about," he mused.

"The man was murdered, and although the police don't seem to be able to do anything about the matter, it does not follow that the murderer cannot be discovered.

"I am a good deal indebted to the old gentleman, for thanks to him I have a position which I probably would never have been able to get if he had not befriended me.

"Now then, hadn't I ought to do something to show that I appreciate his kindness?

"He is dead, so I can't make any return to him; but wouldn't it be a good idea for me to endeavor to discover his murderer?

"Yes!" Jack cried, emphatically. "There is no doubt at all about it; that is just what I ought to do, and I will too!

"And now the question comes before the meeting—how had I better set to work?"

Just as the young man put this question he came to Twenty-third street, and as there were a number of vehicles passing at the time he was compelled to halt upon the curbstone.

There was a tall, muscular, well-dressed gentleman already waiting there, and as Jack halted by his side the gentleman happened to get a view of his face.

"Isn't this Mr. Jack Haversham?" he inquired.

"Yes, that is my name."

"I would like to speak with you upon a little business matter," the stranger remarked.

"I am at your service," Jack answered.

And as he looked inquiringly into the stranger's face, he thought he had never seen a man who had more of the lion in his countenance.

"Suppose we walk down University place," the gentleman suggested. "The block is almost deserted, and we will be able to converse at our ease."

"Certainly; I haven't any objection."

The two proceeded down the street, and after they got out of earshot of the people on the corner the stranger observed:

"I happened to visit the office of Mr. Arnold Haversham once on a little business, and heard the old gentleman call you by name, so when I saw your face to-night I was able to recognize you.

"It is in regard to the death of Mr. Arnold Haversham that I wish to speak, for I am a detective by profession; my name is Joseph Phenix."

The young man was surprised by the declaration, for the well-known detective was no stranger to him by reputation, for Joe

Phenix ranked as one of the greatest man-hunters that the metropolis had ever known.

To the reader who has followed the fortunes of the untiring human bloodhound as depicted in the Joe Phenix tales, it is needless to dilate upon the sterling qualities possessed by this greatest of detectives.

To those who now make his acquaintance for the first time, I will say that, search the detective annals from the beginning to the present time, and the keenest investigation will not discover a man more fearless of all danger, more crafty in devices, or more successful in penetrating the plans of, and capturing, rascals of all grades, from the highest to the lowest, than the veteran Joe Phenix.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Phenix," Jack Haversham declared, offering his hand, while the look on his face plainly showed that he meant what he said.

"Although this is the first time that I have had the pleasure of meeting you, yet you are no stranger to me by reputation."

"Yes, I presume I am about as well known as anybody in the city, thanks to my newspaper friends, who take a good deal of trouble sometimes to report my doings in print, and in their experienced hands a good story never loses anything in the telling," the detective remarked, after he had shaken hands with the young man.

"I have been absent from the city and just got back this morning, but as I always get the New York newspapers when I am out of town, I contrive to keep in touch with the metropolis, so am always posted in regard to what is going on.

"I wish to see you in regard to the untimely death of Mr. Haversham," he continued.

"Being in the private detective line, I am, of course, interested in all these cases where large rewards are offered, for I have no salary paid by a city to fall back upon."

"Yes, I understand; a man cannot be expected to work for nothing."

"I am frank with you about the matter, for that is the way in which I strive to do business. The rewards offered are unusually large, and I feel a disposition to try and see if I can't earn them."

"My dear Mr. Phenix, I shall be delighted to have you undertake the case!" Jack declared.

"Just as you spoke to me I was in a brown study about the matter," the young man continued. "I had made up my mind that it was a duty I owed to the man who made me what I am to try and bring to justice the ruffian who killed him, but I was puzzled how to set about the work.

"Your appearance on the scene suggests a way to me; you are just the man to discover the murderer.

"You can surely do it if any one can, and I will be glad to aid you by every means in my power.

"Another point, Mr. Phenix, it may be possible that this is one of those mysterious crimes which an inscrutable Providence designs shall not be discovered.

"If this should prove to be the case in this instance, and you do not succeed in discovering the guilty party, I will pay you a fair compensation for your time."

Joe Phenix shook his head.

"Your offer is an extremely liberal one," he said. "But I would prefer not to accept it. I am willing to take the case on the no-cure-no-pay rule."

"Just as you like, of course, but I would be glad to do it."

"All I will ask is your hearty co-operation," the veteran detective remarked.

"That I will give, of course. You may command me in any way you please!" the young man announced.

"I have devoted considerable thought to the case, having read all that has been published in the newspapers in regard to the matter, and already have come to the conclusion that this is an 'inside job,' to use the detectives' term."

"I comprehend!" Jack exclaimed. "The crime was committed by some one in the house."

"Yes, either by somebody in the house, or by an outside party admitted to the mansion by one of its inmates."

Jack nodded assent.

"And in order to discover who it was that

committed the crime it will be necessary for the detective to take a position in the household. Of course he must take care to disguise himself so carefully that no one will be apt to suspect he is anything but what he appears to be."

"This is a bold game and an extremely crafty one too!" the young man declared, much impressed by the novel scheme.

"In my judgment it is the only way in which good work can be done," Joe Phenix replied.

"I believe you are right."

"It is not possible for any man on the outside to so shadow the inmates of the house as to be able to learn whether any of them are inclined to be crooked or not."

"Very true!"

"And then in a case of this kind the man-hunter must depend a great deal upon the instinct which comes to the experienced detective after long years in the bloodhound business," Joe Phenix explained.

"I comprehend! The instinct which leads the veteran thief-taker to suspect that there is something wrong about a man or woman when nothing suspicious appears in their looks or actions."

"You have hit it exactly! It is a gift which the detective must possess or else he will not be able to do good work.

"It is something, you understand, which cannot be taught.

"If a man or woman does not possess this peculiar instinct it is certain that they will never amount to much in the detective line."

"I will do all I can to assist you!" Jack Haversham declared.

"You must be introduced to the household in such a way that suspicion cannot be excited," the young man continued in a reflective way.

"Yes, or otherwise my entrance into the house would be useless. Any suspicion that a detective was in the mansion would put the guilty ones on their guard so that it would not be possible to accomplish anything.

"Have you a valet, by the way?"

"No, I have never been able to indulge in such a luxury."

"Suppose you advertise for one. Put the advertisement in immediately so it will appear to-morrow morning. A Swiss, who answers to the name of Carl, will apply, and you must engage him."

"I will do so."

"And mind! not a word to any one about this matter!"

"You can trust me to keep the affair quiet!"

This ended the conversation and the two parted.

The advertisement appeared in the morning.

A tall, yellow-haired Switzer applied for the position and was engaged.

The man-hunter had begun his work.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DOCTOR IS NOT SATISFIED.

It is ten days later.

Orloff, the Russian Jew detective, sauntering up Broadway, the clocks of the metropolis pointing to the hour of ten, encountered Captain MacIverson.

"Ah, captain, you are just the man I wanted to see!" Orloff exclaimed.

"The doctor was after me to-day, anxious to know if I had succeeded in securing the information that he wanted, and I told him I had my men at work on the case, and expected to get a report at any moment."

"I have succeeded in getting at the facts, although it was more trouble than I expected, and the information doesn't amount to much, either."

"Let us drop into the Hoffman House, and take seats in the reading-room; we can converse at our leisure there, and you can take your notes."

Orloff assented, and the pair were soon comfortably seated in a corner of the hotel apartment.

"For some reason Miss Manchester is averse to letting the facts in regard to her early stage career become public, but from an old English actor who happened to meet her when she first went on the stage, I got the information."

Orloff had his note-book out ready to jot down the particulars.

"Her stage career dates back about ten years, and she was put on the boards by an English comedian named John Leslie, who was the proprietor of a traveling burlesque troupe, and a man of considerable ability.

"He apparently took a fancy to the girl, for he did his best to push her ahead, and although she did not show much talent in the beginning, yet as she was pretty, with a good figure, and could both dance and sing fairly, she managed to get on.

"She was so persistently pushed ahead by this Leslie that it was commonly believed there was a love affair between them, and, in fact, it was reported a half a dozen times that they were secretly married, but they did not want the world at large to know it, for fear it would diminish the attractiveness of the actress."

"Ah, yes, I see. That is a common trick of these stage people; but where is this Leslie now—not with this troupe?"

"No, he is dead, died about two years ago, and although Miss Manchester has never admitted that she was married to him, yet it is reported that she put on mourning, and would not act for six months."

"I don't think there is much doubt that she was married to the man, then."

"Yes, the comedian would never have taken the trouble to put her on the stage, and push her ahead in preference to other girls in the company who were more talented, unless there was some reason of this kind."

"No doubt about it."

"There is a little mystery about the affair," the captain continued, "for the woman is not willing to converse about the matter at all."

"I can give you a pointer in regard to that!" the Russian Jew exclaimed, with a knowing grin. "At the time she went on the stage, she had a husband—a doctor, who was absent on a professional trip in India—he is the man I told you about, who is seeking this information—and she was afraid, I suppose, that if it got out that she was in love with the comedian, this husband would be apt to make trouble for both of them."

"Well, the man is dead, so he is out of the reach of vengeance, and, as far as I could learn, she has never had any love affair with anybody else, although there are reports that she and the tenor singer of her opera company are extremely good friends."

"Oh, by the way, I forgot to mention, this Jack Haversham and Miss Manchester are very friendly," the captain continued.

"How many girls does the man want?" the detective exclaimed. "I thought he was devoted to Miss Victorine."

"Well, I don't know. He certainly is paying the *prima donna* a goodly amount of attention."

"I have been working on that clue which you suggested to me," Orloff remarked.

"Have shadowed the young man myself, and had some other good men on the track, but have not picked up anything."

"Don't be in a hurry," MacIverson replied. "If the man is a deep fellow, it is not likely that he will be trapped in a hurry."

"You must keep on the watch until he makes some false move, and then you will stand a chance."

"Well, I will make my report to the doctor," the Russian Jew remarked.

"I told him that I thought I would be able to learn something to-night, and if I did I would come to his house. He is staying at Undertaker Clark's on Fourth Avenue."

"I have a curiosity to learn how he receives the report so I will go with you; he may want to gain some more information, and I might as well undertake the job."

"Yes, that is so."

"There is probably a liquor saloon in the neighborhood, and I can wait there while you have your interview with the doctor."

The detective thought the idea was a good one and the two proceeded on their way.

On the corner above the house of the undertaker was a handsome saloon, and while Orloff went to make his report to the doctor, the captain entered the saloon. Getting a

glass of beer he sat at one of the tables in the rear of the apartment, took up a newspaper and pretended to glance over it.

In reality he was deep in calculation.

"Now then, how is this affair going to turn out?" he murmured.

"It was a very skillfully-devised tale," the captain continued.

"Yes, very nicely put together indeed, and unless this doctor is a much smarter man than I take him to be, he will not be apt to pick flaws in the account.

"Suppose he has doubts and sets to work to examine into the truth of the story?"

"What will he discover?"

"John Leslie was the man who put Bessie Manchester on the stage, and he did push her ahead in the profession, to the neglect of other girls who appeared to be fully as talented."

"There were reports too that the pair were secretly married, and as Leslie, the comedian, is dead, it will not be possible for any one to learn the truth of the matter from him."

"Really now, it certainly looks as if there couldn't be any trouble about the matter."

Having come to this conclusion the captain finished his beer and called for another glass.

By the time that he disposed of this the Russian Jew made his appearance.

MacIverson called for a couple of glasses of beer as Orloff seated himself at the table, and after they were brought, as soon as the bartender was out of earshot, he asked:

"Well, how did you get on?"

"Oh, the man wasn't at all satisfied."

"Is that possible?"

"Yes; he says that my agent was on a false scent altogether."

"Meaning me, I suppose?"

"Yes, of course."

"But I don't see how that could be!" the captain exclaimed in a wondering tone.

"Leslie is not the man he is after at all."

"He is the one who put the woman on the stage," the captain replied.

"That is just what I told him, but he said that Leslie was dead."

"Yes; there isn't any doubt about that."

"The man he seeks is alive."

"Ah, well, if that is the case it isn't Leslie of course."

"And he wants me to try again."

"To find the man?"

"Yes."

"Humph!" MacIverson ejaculated, caressing his beard while a reflective look appeared on his face.

"He is very positive about the matter, and I can plainly see that it is not going to be an easy job to satisfy him."

"Leslie is not the man?" the captain asked in a wondering way.

"Oh, no! He listened patiently while I told him the story of how Leslie placed the girl on the stage and explained that it was supposed the two were secretly married, and when I came to the end he exclaimed:

"Good! you have done well! Is Leslie the manager of this troupe?"

"Aha! he was going to get right after him."

"Then when I explained that Leslie was dead, he was disappointed and immediately said that Leslie was not the man, for the one he sought was living."

"It is a mystery to me how he could be so absolutely certain about the matter," the captain declared.

"I was a little curious about the subject myself and said so, but he did not care to explain evidently, for all he said was, 'The man I want to find is living, and you must set your agents to work again.'"

"You can do that easily enough."

"And then he let fall a few words of caution, telling me that my agents must use the utmost care not to allow this Miss Manchester to guess that there was an investigation on foot for she would certainly do all in her power to battle it if it came to her knowledge."

"He is a persevering fellow!"

"Yes, and although he is very quiet it strikes me that he would be a very ugly enemy if his anger were once aroused."

"I should not be surprised; men of his stamp often prove to be ugly customers."

"Well, I will try again," the captain continued. "I should judge from the doctor's

remarks that the man he wants is right here in New York."

"Yes, he evidently thinks so."

"I ought to be able to discover him, and I will go ahead on a new tack."

Then the pair finished their beer and departed.

They walked to Broadway together and there separated.

"No way but to kill the dog!" the captain muttered.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE STRANGER.

THE Texas doctor was extremely disappointed at the ill success of the detective in obtaining information.

As soon as mention was made that Leslie was dead, he knew he was not the one he sought.

If the man who had decoyed his wife away from him was not living, the *prima donna* would not have been so troubled by his discovery of her.

"The man who did me this grievous wrong is alive and she fears for his safety, otherwise she would have proclaimed that he was dead and defied me to do my worst," Valentine murmured.

"It is possible that I may have made a mistake in my agent."

"This man may not be capable of handling the case, although he seems to be a sharp and shrewd fellow enough."

"I will give him another chance, and then if he does not succeed I will engage somebody else."

The doctor reflected over the matter for a few moments and then an idea came to him.

"Why would it not be a good plan for me to consult this young Mr. Haversham about the matter?" he mused.

"Possibly he could recommend me to some good man, who would be able to find out what I wish to know."

The doctor was a man prompt to act when he once got an idea in his head, and so he proceeded immediately to the Haversham mansion.

As it happened, Jack Haversham was at home, and he was glad to see the doctor, for he desired to consult him in regard to the theory which Victorine had formed about her father's death.

The young man was in the library with Carl, his new valet, in attendance, when the doctor was ushered into the apartment.

During the brief period which elapsed from the announcement of the doctor's name to his entrance into the room, Jack explained to the disguised detective who the doctor was, suggesting that if he retired to the inner room and left the door ajar, he would be able to overhear the conversation.

"I am impressed with the belief that the doctor is a very able man," Jack Haversham said in conclusion. "And, no doubt, from his conversation you will be able to pick up some points which will be of value."

Joe Phenix thought it was likely, but before he could get out of the way, the doctor made his entrance into the apartment, and so the two men caught sight of each other.

Valentine, after the usual greetings were over, came at once to the object of his visit.

He explained that he had some business which required the aid of a detective, and that he was not satisfied with the work of the man whom he employed, and wished to get a first-class man to take hold of the case.

Jack Haversham at once recommended Joe Phenix.

"I don't know his exact address, but I have an idea that my valet, Carl, does."

So the disguised detective was summoned and the information gained.

After Carl had retired the young man explained to the doctor the peculiar ideas which Victorine had in regard to her father's death, touching as lightly as possible on the subject of the old man's habit of indulging to excess in liquor.

"The supposition is entirely out of the question," the doctor declared.

And then he explained at length how it was that both he and Doctor Merriweather were so certain that Arnold Haversham had come to his death by the hands of a merciless stranger.

The pair discussed the subject for fifty

or twenty minutes, and then the doctor took his departure.

As soon as he was gone the disguised detective made his appearance.

"The doctor's conversation has suggested some points to me," Joe Phenix remarked. "And I would like to have a talk with him upon the matter, so I think I will call upon him."

"I will go to my house and get rid of this disguise, so as to appear to him in my own proper person."

"It will be easy for me to explain that I happened to meet you, and so was informed that he desired to see me."

"Ah, yes, that explanation will be a reasonable one."

"The doctor is staying with Undertaker Clark, on Fourth avenue."

"Yes, I think I know about the exact location; but I can go up Fourth avenue, on my way to my domicile, and so make sure," the disguised detective remarked, as he took his departure.

We will follow Doctor Valentine, who took his way to his home, feeling better satisfied than when he had left it.

"Someway I have got an idea that this Mr. Orloff is not a first-class man," the doctor remarked, communing with himself as he walked on.

"Oftentimes these detectives are men who do not detect," he continued.

"But whether the man is good or bad in his peculiar line it will not do any hurt to employ a second party."

The doctor proceeded at a slow pace, meditating as he walked, his brow clouded by the dark lines of thought.

"The woman has wrecked all my life as far as home happiness is concerned," he mused. "And to my thinking the chances are great that she never would have taken the step had she not been fascinated by the wiles of this man, who keeps himself so carefully in the background."

"But I will find him in time, though!"

And there was a deal of fierce determination in the way the Texan uttered the sentence.

As Valentine came to the door of his house, he was accosted by a tall, slender, sober-looking man, dressed in a well-worn black suit, who presented the appearance of a decayed schoolmaster.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but are you the gentleman who lives in this house and who engaged Mr. Orloff to do a little bit of business for you?" the man asked, in a very humble way.

"Yes, I am the party."

"Well, sir, maybe I can put you in the way of getting the information which you require, if you are willing to do business direct with me," the stranger remarked.

"I don't know as there is any particular objection to my doing so," the doctor responded, after reflecting upon the matter for a moment.

"I have been employed by Mr. Orloff upon your business," the man explained. "And I don't suppose that it is quite right for me to go back on him," the man continued, with a melancholy shake of the head.

"But you see, sir, this is a hard world," he added. "And if a man don't look after himself, he will be apt to get left dreadful badly, as the boys say."

"That is certainly the truth!"

"Mr. Orloff is not an easy man to get along with, and in a case like yours, sir, he expects his men to do all the work for a mere trifle, while he charges a good round sum just for bossing the job."

"Such is very often the case."

"It was I, sir, that got all the information about Mr. Leslie, and although it took me the better part of a week, yet all Mr. Orloff was willing to pay for the job was a five-dollar note."

"You will not get rich very quickly at that rate."

"No, sir! It is the Jew who will make the money, although I do the work."

"But to come to the point, for I didn't lie in wait for you, sir, to complain about my pay, which, of course, is a matter in which you can't take any interest," the stranger remarked, in his deferential way, so full of obsequiousness.

"I have succeeded in getting more infor-

mation about the early career of this Miss Manchester, happening to run across an old English actor who was a member of the company with which she made her first appearance on the stage."

The doctor was interested immediately.

"Such a man ought to be able to give information of value," Valentine declared.

"He says that he can," the melancholy man replied.

"I am an actor myself," the stranger continued. "And in my better days I used to do very well on the stage, but since I have fallen into the sere and yellow leaf, young men have thrust me aside, and so I am glad to pick up a dollar where I can."

"But this is neither here nor there!" the stranger observed with another melancholy shake of the head.

"Only it leads up to what I was going to say: being an actor myself, this old English professional is inclined to trust me, but he will not have anything to do with the Jew."

"Oh, no!" he declared, when I told him I wanted to find out all the particulars and that Mr. Orloff had employed me."

"If the Jew has anything to do with the matter, you can be sure there is some money in it, and I am not the man to put any cash in his pocket; besides, I am sick, and laid up so I can't act, and I ought to have the ducats if there are any to be made."

"It is not an unreasonable suggestion on his part."

"So he suggested to me that I should play the spy on the Jew and find out who it was that wanted the information, then go and try to make a bargain with them."

"Yes, that is all right from your standpoint; but ought I to enter into this arrangement with you?" the doctor asked, hesitatingly.

"If you don't you will not get the information," the stranger urged. "For this old Englishman is a stubborn fellow and declares he will not do any business through the Jew."

"Just you find the man and bring him to my bedside if he wants to know what I know," he said, the last thing to me."

CHAPTER XXIII.

ON THE QUEST.

"THE man is clearly right!" the doctor declared. "As the information is in his possession if any one makes any money out of it he ought to have it."

"Of course Mr. Orloff is entitled to something for having put you and your friend in the way of getting at me," Valentine added.

"But I will attend to paying him, and if your friend can give me the information which I seek, he will find me a liberal man."

"He can tell you all about the actress, for his wife was in the company when this Bessie Manchester made her first appearance, and as she took a fancy to the girl she helped her all she could; they were great friends, you understand, and as it is natural for these women to talk, and confide in each other when they get to be bosom friends, the Manchester girl told this man's wife all her secrets, and she told them to her husband."

"He can probably tell me what I want to know!" the doctor exclaimed, satisfied that he was on the right track and eager for the information.

"How soon can I see him?"

"Just as soon as you like!" the other replied.

"You can come now, to-night, if you like," he continued. "Or you can wait until morning. It doesn't make any difference to me."

"My friend doesn't live in Fifth avenue, you understand, but in a very poor quarter over on the east side of town, but beggars cannot be choosers, you know, and I don't suppose a man ought to complain so long as he has a good roof over his head."

"If he has shelter and can get enough to eat he is lucky!"

"I might as well go with you to-night as to wait until to-morrow," the doctor declared, after thinking the matter over for a moment.

"Yes, I suppose it would be as well. The quicker you go the sooner you will get the information, but you don't need the information half as badly as we need the money,"

the seedy stranger remarked with a grave wagging of the head.

"But that doesn't make any difference to you, sir, and I wouldn't urge you on that account," he continued.

"I will venture to remark though that it is a poor place and you mustn't mind the surroundings."

"Shall we have to take a car, or can we walk?"

"If we take a car we will have to go in a roundabout way, and if you don't mind a twenty minutes' walk?"

"Not at all!"

"Then we had better walk."

"I am ready to set out immediately."

"All right, sir. If you will have the kindness to come with me, I will take you directly to the house."

And then, after they crossed the avenue and entered upon the side street, the guide remarked:

"I think, sir, you decided wisely in making up your mind to come to-night, for it is always best to take time by the forelock, and my friend too is a very sick man; there is no telling how soon the end may come, you know, although he is making a desperate fight for life, like the bold Briton that he is."

"As I am a doctor, possibly I may be able to be of service to him," Valentine remarked.

"Ah, sir, I am afraid that all the doctors in the world wouldn't do him any good," the other declared.

"It is old age and rum, and, sir, when a man has played ducks and drakes with himself for a good forty years it isn't to be expected that he can pull up in the end like as if he was a prancing cab horse and go on all right."

"Very true! Dame Nature is a severe mistress, and demands a strict account in the long run," the doctor observed.

"It is a sad affair," the stranger remarked in his melancholy way.

There were only a few more words of no importance exchanged between the two until they reached their destination, which was a squalid-looking tenement house, one of a long block, situated in a side street running from the East River.

"You see that it is just as I told you, sir," the melancholy man observed.

"It is a poor place—a very poor place," he continued.

"You see, sir, the old fellow and I room together, and as he hasn't been able to do a stroke of work for a good two months now it is pretty hard scratching for us to get along."

"But he is my pal; as the boys say; I am an Englishman too, you see, and I will stick to the old man as long as I can contrive to keep my head above water."

"If your friend can furnish me with the information that I want I will be glad to give you money enough to keep you in comfort for two or three months at the least!" the doctor declared.

"Oh, I don't think there is any doubt but what he can do it!" the other exclaimed in a confident tone.

"And I can tell you, sir, that the money will be a god-send to us too."

"The stairway is dark, but after you get hold of the bannister you will be all right," the stranger observed as he led the way through the entry.

The door was fixed so it would remain open, it being the "family entrance" to the dingy saloon which occupied the first floor of the building.

But after the two began the ascent of the stairs, and got away from the few rays of light which came in from the open door, the darkness was dense indeed.

Probably it would have been a difficult matter in all the great metropolis to have found a more disreputable tenement than the one the two were now in.

The air was full of all sorts of disagreeable smells, in addition to those of stale liquor and vile tobacco which ascended from the saloon.

But the doctor in his capacity as a physician had penetrated into too many dens of this kind to be surprised by the wretchedness of the surroundings.

As the melancholy man had remarked, "beggars cannot be choosers," and the poor

in the great cities are oftentimes glad to be able to get any kind of a shelter.

The house was tenanted by a disorderly lot of people too, for wild bursts of hoarse laughter, ribald songs and sounds of voices high in quarrel came to the ears of the pair as they ascended the narrow stairs in the gloom.

"There is a precious rough pack of tenants in this old house," the stranger remarked as they passed the door of one of the rooms, where, judging from the noise which came from within, the people were on the verge of a free fight.

"But as my mate and I have always kept to ourselves we have never had any trouble," the stranger remarked.

"And then too, we know enough to keep a civil tongue in our heads, and a civil tongue is a wonderful preventive against an attack."

"Very true," the doctor assented.

"Our room is on the next floor, right over the one where all that loud talking was going on; they usually have a row there nightly."

"It is an Irish family who take boarders; they are all hard-working men, and when the 'growler' gets to circulating in a lively manner there is apt to be a difference of opinion among them, which usually results in a fight, but the women get in between, and although there is apparently a fearful row, yet nobody seems to get badly enough hurt to warrant the calling in of the police."

"That is a peculiar trait of a certain class of the Irish the world over," the doctor observed.

"They break each other's heads at night, and in the morning are as good friends as ever."

"Ah, yes, Pat is a comical creature, sometimes," the other replied.

"But here we are, sir!"

And as he spoke he opened a door which was directly at the head of the flight of stairs which the two had just ascended.

"Walk right in, sir, and you must excuse the wretchedness of the apartment, for we have been awfully hard-pushed for the last month or so, and everything that was worth anything, which we could possibly do without, has been sold."

As Valentine advanced into the room he saw that it could not boast of many articles of furniture.

There wasn't any bed, only a rude bunk arranged on some boxes, whereon lay a man with a ragged quilt drawn over him.

His back was to the door, and he was apparently asleep, for he did not move when the pair entered.

There were only two other articles of furniture in the room beside the bunk, a rickety, three-legged table, propped up in a corner, and a chair without a back. On the table a candle, stuck in a bottle, afforded light.

"My partner has dozed off, I expect, the melancholy man remarked.

"But I suppose that is a good sign," he continued.

"I say, Hiram, old pal, I have done the trick! Here is the gentleman come to see you, and we will get the money and so do the Jew!"

The man on the bed yawned and turned over; the doctor had advanced, and was within a yard of him.

Then the trained nostrils of Valentine suddenly detected the odor of chloroform.

Hardly had he made this discovery when the melancholy stranger, who had stolen with noiseless steps up behind him, grasped him with a grip of iron, pinioning his arms to his side.

Up from the bunk leaped the supposed sick man.

In his hands he had a sponge saturated with chloroform, and this he pressed to the nostrils of the struggling doctor, and at the same moment a third man made his appearance from a closet, brandishing a short club.

Too late the doctor saw that he had been entrapped.

CHAPTER XXIV

A SURPRISE.

THE doctor was a powerful man, right in the prime of life, and although he had been taken at such a disadvantage, he struggled with the energy of despair.

But there were three against one, and as the man with the sponge clung to Valentine like a leech, keeping the article tightly pressed against the doctor's nostrils, so that the fumes of the powerful narcotic could do its work, it was soon apparent that the assailed doctor could not shake off his foes.

As the chloroform began to take effect, the struggles of the doctor became less violent.

He could not call for help sufficiently loud to enable him to give an alarm, for he was practically gagged by the sponge, and then the people in the room below were making so much noise that it would have required a loud outcry to be distinguished above the racket which they were kicking up.

The doctor was weakening so rapidly that it was plain he could not hold out but for a few moments longer.

The ruffians were quick to detect that their victim was rapidly getting weaker, the baleful influence of the powerful chloroform sapping his strength, and they were just beginning to grin in exultation over the success of their plans when the little game was suddenly and rudely interrupted.

The door was not locked, for the decoy duck who had led the doctor into the trap had not dared to attempt to fasten the door, for it would have been a difficult matter for him to do anything of the kind without arousing the suspicions of the destined victim.

The three relied upon the noise being made by the quarreling Irishmen to cover up their struggle with the doctor.

Then, too, there were so many rows happening in the building that the residents had got used to that sort of thing, and the tenants seldom troubled themselves to interfere in their neighbors' quarrels.

The scheme was carefully planned and extremely well executed, and undoubtedly would have been successful if the unexpected, which is always happening, as the French say, had not occurred.

But just as the doctor's strength began to give way—just on the very eve of victory—the door opened and a man bounded into the room.

He was armed with a short club, and his first act was to give the melancholy man a rap on the head with it which had the effect of making that individual see more stars than he had ever beheld at one time in the heavens.

He released his grip upon Valentine and staggered into a corner of the room, going down all in a heap half stunned by the stroke.

The first blow was quickly followed by a second, and this felled the man with the sponge as the ox goes down under the blow of the butcher.

Valentine, being released from the grasp of his foes, staggered against the wall, and but for the support afforded by it would have fallen.

The third ruffian—the man with the club—was so amazed by this unexpected interruption that he did not know what to do.

He hesitated for a moment, and then perceiving that he had but a single man to deal with, made up his mind to attack him.

His hesitation proved fatal to this plan though, for, profiting by the delay, the newcomer allowed his club to drop—it was fastened to his wrist by a short leather cord—whipped out a revolver and had the ruffian "covered" before the man fairly comprehended what the other intended to do.

"Drop your club or I will save the hangman a job!" the intruder exclaimed.

The fellow obeyed on the instant, for there was that certain something in the voice giving the command which completely satisfied the ruffian that the man with the pistol would not hesitate to shoot him on the instant if he did not comply.

And even in the midst of this exciting scene it struck the ruffian as being extremely strange that a green-looking, flaxen-haired German, as the newcomer appeared to be, could have the nerve to play such a game.

The rescuer who had come so unexpectedly to the doctor's assistance was the man who had entered Jack Haversham's service as his valet, and who was known as Carl.

Our readers, of course, understand that this was the renowned detective, Joe Phenix,

in one of his complex disguises, but the ruffians did not possess this knowledge, and therefore it is not strange that they should be amazed by the exceeding good fight which the supposed German "put up," to use the slang of the day.

The ruffian with the club took one look into the determined eyes of the disguised detective after the order was given to drop the club, and then let go of the weapon with as much celerity as if it had suddenly become red-hot.

The human bloodhound produced a pair of handcuffs from his pocket.

"Here! catch these bracelets and snap them on your wrists; you understand how to do it well enough, for you have been there many a time," the disguised detective commanded.

"You don't mean to say that you are a fly-cop?" the ruffian cried in amazement.

"I will pass for one for the time being," was the reply.

"But come! on with the bracelets and don't be all night about it either!"

"You are too old a bird not to understand that you are caught dead to rights, and there isn't any use of your trying to get out of the hole, for you are booked for a trip up the river, and no mistake!"

"Maybe! but I am not so sure of that," the ruffian growled as he snapped the handcuffs on his wrists.

"There is many a slip between the cup and the lip, you know!"

By this time the doctor had recovered enough from the assault to be able to express himself.

"My dear sir, how can I sufficiently thank you for coming in this timely manner to my assistance?" Valentine exclaimed, advancing to the disguised detective.

"Don't mention it, sir, I am glad to have been able to be of service to you," Joe Phenix replied.

At this point the two men who had been knocked down by the man-hunter began to recover.

The melancholy man was the first to get on his feet.

He rose slowly, and, in a voice full of rage, exclaimed:

"You have pretty nearly cracked my head open with your infernal club, and if I don't get square with you one of these days then I ain't the man that I think I am."

"The same way with me," remarked the big fellow, who had been so handy with the sponge, rising to a sitting posture, and rubbing his head in a rueful way as he spoke.

"Gold-durn ye! I would like to git one crack at you, jest for greens!"

"If I wouldn't lay you out so you would stay laid out for awhile then I don't want a cent!"

Apparently the speaker was a genuine countryman, for he spoke like a regular "hayseed."

"Don't waste your breath!" the man-hunter counseled. "Keep it to talk to your lawyers!"

"You fellows are in a trap, and if you are wise you will say as little as possible," he continued.

"Now, then, here are a pair of bracelets for you two, but as this is the only pair I have left, I will have to handcuff you together."

"Hold up your wrists!"

And then with the dexterity due to long practice at this sort of thing, the detective handcuffed the ruffians to each other.

The doctor watched the proceeding with wondering eyes.

He understood now that the man whom young Haversham had termed his valet was a detective in disguise, and being a shrewd-witted fellow it did not take him long to come to the conclusion that the detective was in the Haversham mansion for the express purpose of solving the mystery which surrounded the death of the old cotton broker.

This puzzle he could solve easily enough, but why the ruffians had made such a ferocious attack on him was a mystery entirely beyond his comprehension.

And, acting on the spur of the moment, he determined to question the fellows in regard to the matter.

"Would you mind if I asked these men why they made this outrageous attack on me?" he inquired of the man-hunter.

"Oh, no! ask them all the questions you like; I am agreeable."

"Say! if you know your business, you ought to warn us to be careful what we say for our words will be evidence against us," the melancholy man declared.

"Oh, you know all about that, and there isn't any necessity for my speaking," the disguised rogue-catcher replied.

"You know all the ins and outs of your case as well as I do, and I would defy the smartest detective in the land to give you any points," he added.

"You are talking as if you knew a lot!" the tall, thin fellow exclaimed. "But I would be willing to bet a small fortune that you don't know one-half as much as you pretend."

"I happen to know *you* all right, and your fat friend, to whom you are so closely attached just at present," the disguised detective replied.

"Oh, you do?" the crook exclaimed, scornfully.

"Yes, you are Timothy Hollencote, an imported English rascal, usually called by your pals Skinny Tim, and your best lay is the confidence line."

"Your companion is an old-time pal of yours, and the two of you have worked many a game together in the bunco line."

"He is called Hiram Dolliday, but is better known as Old Hayseed, and his lay is the guileless countryman."

"This other man I don't know, for he is a stranger," and Joe Phenix nodded to the man who had the club.

"But I judge from his looks that he is a foreigner—a Frenchman, I should say, and from the fact that he is found in your company I don't doubt that he is some notorious rascal who has been obliged to cross the sea on account of his own country having grown too hot to hold him."

"One thing is certain: this little affair will enable me to make his acquaintance, and I will surely know him again if we chance to meet," Joe Phenix concluded, with a grim smile.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DOCTOR QUESTIONS.

THE three crooks shook their heads in an angry way, but they were in the toils and could not help themselves.

"This affair is a complete mystery to me," the doctor remarked. "And I must admit that I walked into the trap without having the slightest suspicion that I was being made a fool of in the most complete manner."

"But I would like to know why you made this attack on me?"

"Oh, well, as long as the jig is up I don't suppose there is any harm in letting you know just what we were up to," Skinny Tim remarked, in a reflective way.

"You see, boss, my pals and myself have been playing in mighty hard luck for the last week or so," he continued.

"Why, if we put up a stake on a horse, the blamed old skate was sure to come in at the tail-end of the string, and try our best we couldn't collar a dollar."

"In fact, we were so badly broke that we have been obliged to go on as supers at the theaters, so as to get enough to put up for the grub and a bed."

"I had a job as a super at the Academy of Music, and when this private fly-cop, Orloff, came after the information that you wanted he made a bargain with a man, and that man made a deal with me, so that is how I came to get into the matter."

"Then the story that I told you about Orloff not being willing to pay much of anything for the information was all straight enough, or, anyway, that was what the man who put me onto the job said, and as I know the Jew to be a regular skinflint I don't doubt that it is the truth."

"Then the idea came into my head that if I could get at the man who had hired Orloff I might be able to make a stake."

"So I piped the Jew off, and when I saw what kind of a man you was I made up my mind that if I could get you to a place where me and my pals could go through you for your valuables the trick would be worth working."

"Possibly this is the truth, but, from the

ferocious way in which the attack was made, it would seem as if you wanted to kill me," the doctor remarked, evidently doubtful in regard to the truth of the man's statement.

"Oh, that was only a part of the game, so we could go through you without any trouble," the crook replied.

"We didn't want to knock you in the head, or damage you at all."

"All we wanted was your valuables, and it was our game to get them as easily as possible," Skinny Tim continued.

"By coming the chloroform act on you we fixed the thing so that you couldn't give an alarm, and if this fly-cop hadn't jumped into the game we would have cleaned you out as sure as fate."

"You would not have got a great deal, for I am not in the habit of carrying much money with me, and my jewelry doesn't amount to anything," Valentine remarked.

"Well, we are so hard-pushed that we have got to be pretty desperate, and I suppose we would be mighty near willing to kill a man for ten dollars!" Skinny Tim declared.

"As it will be rather inconvenient to march you three to Police Headquarters, I will get a carriage," the disguised detective remarked at this point.

"Doctor, would you mind going out and telling the first policeman you see that I have got these three men here and need a carriage to take them to Headquarters?" the veteran detective asked.

"Certainly! I will be glad to be able to be of assistance to you," the doctor replied.

"If you don't happen to meet a policeman, by keeping on up the street for five blocks you will come to a station-house, and when you explain the situation to the sergeant in command he will know what to do."

"All right! I will attend to the matter!" Valentine declared.

And then he hurried away.

"Now, boys, you can sit down on the bunk while I take the chair, and we will try to be as comfortable as possible until the time comes for us to start," Joe Phenix remarked, placing the chair by the door as he spoke and seating himself upon it.

"Oh, I know just what you are thinking about," Skinny Tim declared, as he with his companions took seats on the bunk.

"You are going to get a carriage because you are afraid that if you attempt to march us through the streets some of our pals will get up a gang and snake us out of your hands," the crook continued in a sarcastic way.

"Yes, you are right; I am a little apprehensive that some game of that kind might be tried," the detective remarked.

"I am no stranger to this locality, and I know perfectly well the kind of people who reside in this neighborhood."

"They haven't the highest opinion in the world of the police; in fact, they are inclined to regard all detectives and policemen as being their natural enemies, and, going on general principles, they are always ready to make trouble for them whenever they can, so that if I should attempt, single-handed, to take you three through the street the chances are great that a mob would gather, and an effort be made to rescue you."

"And the gang would do it, too!" Skinny Tim declared. "They would do you up in no time!"

"Possibly, for one man opposed to twenty doesn't stand much chance," the detective replied.

"But if I was attacked under such circumstances, I should not hesitate to use my revolver, and unless the mob managed to lay me out at the first clip, the chances are that somebody would get hurt."

There was no bravado in the way the detective uttered this speech, and yet there was something in his manner which gave the crooks the impression that it would not be an easy job for even so many as twenty men to take them out of his hands.

"I don't suppose that we can square this thing with you in any way?" Skinny Tim remarked, after a long period of silence.

"Oh, no! You ought to know that no such arrangement as that can be made."

"The thing could be worked easily enough, though, if you cared to go into it," Skinny Tim remarked, in a persuasive way.

"The doctor is the man who will make the complaint, of course," the old crook continued.

"Now, as he is out of the way, it will not be possible for him to know what goes on here, and if you should meet him on his return with the story that a gang rushed in on you, and, being overpowered, you could not prevent us from escaping, the chances are a thousand to one that he would not kick up any row about it."

"That is probably true enough, for it would not be possible for him to prove that it was not so, and then, too, he would undoubtedly take my word for it."

"But what is the use of your talking about such a game as this?" the detective asked. "Even supposing that I was willing, for a consideration, to work the trick, you fellows haven't got any money to put up, and it is money which makes the mare go, you know."

"Of course, if you wouldn't do it anyway, there isn't any use of our wasting our breath talking about the matter," the old crook remarked, in a reflective way.

"Suppose I was inclined to make a deal, could you raise a hundred?" Joe Phenix asked.

It was the man-hunter's idea to draw the fellow out.

He had his suspicions in regard to the truth of the story which Skinny Tim had told in regard to the attack on the doctor, and he desired to find out if there was some one in the background.

"You think a hundred cases would be about the figure, eh?" the old crook inquired.

"It ought to be worth that if it is worth anything."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"But, as you said, what is the use of talking; you are broke, all of you, and if you are in that condition you can't raise any money," the detective suggested.

"Ah, well, that is a good gag to give that doctor bloke, for if he thinks we were driven to attack him because we were down to our uppers he will not be so apt to be hard on us, but if you really know anything about me, as you pretend, you ought to be aware that such a man as I am can always raise a stake."

"Yes, I presume that is the truth," the sleuth-hound replied, reflectively.

"I can get the hundred cases easily enough if you are open to make the deal!" the crook declared, confidently.

"But you haven't got the cash with you now?" the detective suggested.

"What do you take me for? a walking National bank?" Skinny Tim asked with a grin.

"The trick will have to be worked right away, for it can't be done after the doctor returns, so if you haven't got the money I would have to take your word for it," the captor remarked.

"You would be safe in doing it!" the old crook urged.

"You can bet your sweet life that I wouldn't go back on a man who took the trouble to get me out of a hole," he continued.

"Ah, no, the risk is too big," the detective declared.

"If I should go into this game, after you got safely away, you might be more inclined to give me the grand laugh than the solid cash."

"Oh, well, if you ain't inclined to trust me we cannot make a deal, and we will have to face the music," Skinny Tim remarked with the air of a philosopher.

"By the way, what is this business that Orloff and the doctor are mixed up in? Any chance for a man to make a stake?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Nary a chance!" the crook replied. "The doctor is anxious to find out all he can about this actress, Bessie Manchester, who is playing at the Academy of Music, but I didn't have anything to do with the matter; that is only a 'stall' that I gave the bloke."

"How did you know anything about the affair then?" Joe Phenix asked.

"One of the men that Orloff put on the case happened to tell what he was doing, and that gave me the idea of putting up the job on the doctor," Skinny Tim replied.

"Well, it would have been a good thing

for you if you hadn't gone into it," the detective suggested.

"Tell me something that I don't know!" the crook rejoined.

At this point the conversation was interrupted.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A CLUE.

DOCTOR VALENTINE made his appearance with three policemen.

"I had to go to the station-house," he explained.

"This gentleman spoke about getting a coach," one of the officers said, nodding to the doctor.

"But as there are three of us it will not be necessary to go to that expense."

"That is true," the detective assented.

"You fellows want to come along quietly now," the officer warned, addressing the crooks.

"And you must understand, right in the beginning, that if you attempt to cut up nasty we will be mighty apt to make it warm for you," he continued.

"Oh, that is all right! Give us a rest!" Skinny Tim exclaimed.

The party then started.

The policemen took the arms of their prisoners, while the disguised detective and Doctor Valentine brought up the rear.

The station-house was soon reached; there the prisoners were arraigned before the sergeant, the complaint taken, and then the prisoners were conveyed to the cells.

After the formalities were completed, Doctor Valentine and the disguised detective departed.

As all the policemen were strangers to Joe Phenix, he did not reveal to them who he was, but simply gave his name as Carl Wenzel. After the two got into the street the doctor referred to the matter.

"Although you gave your name as Carl Wenzel, I have a shrewd suspicion that it is not your right appellation," Valentine said.

"You are correct in regard to that, but in a case of this kind I prefer to keep under cover as long as I can.

"I am not in search of reputation now, you understand, and it is for my interest to keep as much in the background as possible."

"I presume that you have assumed this disguise and entered Mr. Haversham's service as his valet in order to get at the heart of the mystery which envelops the death of Mr. Arnold Haversham?"

"Yes, that is my motive."

"It is a very strange case," the doctor remarked. "And the more I consider the matter the greater becomes my perplexity."

"I am glad to be able to have the opportunity to discuss the matter with you," the detective declared. "For it is possible that you can give me some points."

"Now, for instance, what do you think of this idea that Miss Victorine has about her father's death being due to an accident?"

"Oh, no, not at all!" the doctor replied immediately.

"Mr. Haversham was murdered! There is no doubt whatever about it."

"He was strangled to death?"

"Yes; and from the marks on the throat I am satisfied that he was killed by some one who understands the process by means of which the famous stranglers, the Thugs of India, compass the death of their victims."

"Ah, this is a new point!" the detective exclaimed.

"This is the first that I have heard of this matter, and it is important, too."

Then Valentine explained at length how it was that he came to have this opinion.

"This may prove to be a most important clue to the murderer," Joe Phenix remarked, when the doctor had completed the recital.

"And now, Mr. Valentine, perhaps I may be able to be of service to you," the detective continued.

"I do not place any reliance in this story that the crook told about the attack on you. I do not think three men of this kind would have gone to so much trouble for the sake of plundering you of what valuables you might chance to have on your person."

"You see, I know two of the men so well

that I am satisfied that they would not have engaged in a job of this kind without they were sure in advance that they would be well-paid for their work, for it is altogether out of their line."

"Of course I am not competent to pass an opinion on the subject."

"Have you any enemy in New York who might desire to do you harm?"

"No, not to my knowledge."

"It is my opinion, doctor, that you had a narrow escape from being killed, and I am firmly of the impression that it was deliberately planned in advance."

"Well, it certainly does look like it."

"I had made up my mind to have a talk with you about the Haversham mystery, and was on my way to the house when I saw you in conversation with the old crook."

"I suspected that there was mischief on foot immediately and so kept in the background."

"It was fortunate for me that the incident occurred."

"And now, doctor, have you any objections to tell me about this business which you have engaged Orloff to look after?" Joe Phenix asked.

"Certainly not!" Valentine declared. "And as it is in your line perhaps you can be of service to me."

And then the doctor told the story of his marriage, and how he had found his runaway wife masquerading in New York under the name of Bessie Manchester.

Explained that Orloff had been engaged to gain information, and that he had not been satisfied with the report that the dead comedian, Leslie, was the man of whom he, the doctor, was in search.

"I think I understand the situation," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Orloff is a man whom I know pretty well, and I have not a very good opinion of him, for I do not think he is honest."

"He undertook the work for you, but if he gained any important information he is just the kind of man to try and sell it to the other side, if he got the idea that they would be apt to pay more money than could be got out of you."

"Of course I do not know anything about the man," the doctor observed.

"I happened to meet him just by accident. He came to see if I could give him any information in regard to the death of Mr. Haversham, as he was anxious to try for the reward, and as I had determined to employ a detective I engaged him, and after a time he made his report as I explained to you."

"Well, it is my impression that either Orloff has sold you out to the other party, or else he has managed the affair in such a clumsy way that the man of whom you are in search comprehended what your game was."

"Did you tell your runaway wife that you intended to find the man for the purpose of calling him to an account?" the detective asked.

"Oh, yes!" the doctor replied, immediately. "It has always been my custom to fight fairly, and so I made no secret of what action I intended to take."

"Of course the woman would at once warn the man that a foe was on his track," Joe Phenix remarked reflectively.

"Yes, undoubtedly."

"Being thus forewarned, the man was forearmed, as the saying is, so the moment that Orloff commenced to make inquiries he knew what the Jew was up to."

"That is probable."

"And he took advantage of the fact that that the actor was dead who was connected with the early stage life of your wife to put him forward as being the man of whom you were in search."

"Yes, it was a sharp trick, but I detected that it was a trick immediately, for if the man had been dead the wretched woman would have immediately told me so when I threatened vengeance upon him."

"Undoubtedly!" the veteran detective assented.

"She would have been prompt to inform you that he was out of reach of all earthly vengeance," Joe Phenix argued.

"But she trembled," the doctor declared. "She feared for his life. She dreaded lest I should find and strike him down."

"Yes, you are undoubtedly right in this supposition. The man is here in New York in communication with the woman, and when he found that you could not be deceived by his sharp trick of throwing the blame on a dead man, he became desperate, resolved to strike at your life, and employed these ruffians to kill you."

"I think your conclusion is a correct one, and you can rest assured that I will be on my guard in future."

"And now, my dear sir, will you undertake my case?" Valentine continued. "Will you aid me to find this man, who is evidently a most desperate scoundrel?"

"I will!" Joe Phenix replied, promptly. "And I agree with you that the man must be a hard case or else he would never have been mixed up with these old crooks."

CHAPTER XXVII.

ON THE SCENT.

IT WAS the veteran detective's idea that some information might be gained from one of the three crooks in regard to the man who had instigated the attack on the doctor, but he was disappointed in regard to this, for all three of the men stuck steadily to the story that they were hard-up, and selected the doctor for a victim because they fancied a "good stake" might be made out of him.

As Joe Phenix had been for years accustomed to dealing with all sorts of rascals he had got to be an excellent judge of human nature as found in this particular line, and so he soon came to the opinion that Old Hayseed and the Frenchman were telling the truth when they declared that they had attacked the doctor merely for the purpose of getting his valuables, and the surprise was genuine which they manifested when the detective suggested that for some unknown reason they wanted to kill the doctor.

By dint of shrewd questioning too, the sleuth-hound ascertained that it was the old crook, Skinny Tim, who had got up the scheme.

Then the detective thought he comprehended how the affair had been arranged.

The man whom the doctor sought had made an agreement with the old crook to get Valentine out of the way, and he had got his pals to join in the scheme, representing to them that all he designed to do was to rob the man.

Then, when the trick was worked, it would be an easy matter to make a mistake in using the narcotic, and so kill the man instead of simply stupefying him.

Now the first thing to be done was to get at the principal—the unknown in the background—through the old crook.

But the detective realized, right in the beginning, that this would be an extremely difficult job, for Skinny Tim was an old stager, a man who was not apt to make a mistake.

A well-known firm of criminal lawyers came forward to defend the prisoners.

Possibly the unknown man had hired them. In a case of this kind it is difficult to get at the truth for the lawyers will not "give away" their client.

Joe Phenix did his best to get at the facts in the case, but as nearly as he could find out the firm had defended the old crook before and no third party appeared in the transaction.

As the evidence was so clear, the men having been caught right at work, the case went through with wonderful quickness, when the proverbial law's delays are considered.

The jury brought in a verdict of guilty without leaving their seats, and the judge promptly sentenced the men.

The crooks "took their gruel" without a word.

The eminent lawyers who defended them, after learning the particulars of the affair, had said in the beginning that there wasn't a chance for them.

They had danced, and now must pay the piper.

After the sentence was passed Joe Phenix, through a trusted agent, tried to get some information out of Skinny Tim, but that worthy wouldn't be "pumped," and so nothing was gained.

The detective reported his failure to Doctor Valentine.

"As far as the crooks are concerned, we

are through with them," he said. "And now I will turn my attention to the actress and see if I can't make some discoveries in that quarter."

"There isn't a doubt in my mind that this man is in New York, and in communication with her, and it ought not to be a difficult matter to find out who he is."

"You have my full permission to use all the money necessary to accomplish the result," the doctor declared.

"Don't hesitate in spending all you like. I am a rich man, and in this case I am willing to spend my last dollar to secure vengeance upon the man who lured my wife away."

"I will do my best for you, and although I am working on the Haversham case, I think I can manage to arrange matters so that I can attend to this little affair for you without any difficulty."

"I really hope you will be able to do so, for it is my impression that you will succeed."

"Well, at present I do not see any reason why I should not be able to do so," the detective replied.

And then the pair parted.

The first thing that the man-hunter did was to go to his house and there assume another disguise.

The sleek Swiss valet was speedily transformed into a long-haired gentleman who looked like a German professor, and when the sleuth-hound half-hid his hawk-like eyes behind a pair of old-fashioned glasses, the transformation was so complete that no signs remained of either the original Joe Phenix or Carl, the Switzer.

Then he took his way to the Academy of Music.

It was a matinee day, and the performance had just commenced when he arrived at the theater.

The disguised detective secured a good seat, only the third row from the stage, so he could have a plain view of the faces of the performers.

It was his design to make the acquaintance of some of the principal members of the troupe, and he wanted a chance to see what they looked like.

The audience was a poor one, and as a consequence the performance was not up to the mark, the actors apparently being discouraged by the fact that the auditors were cold, dull, and not inclined to applaud.

Joe Phenix was an old theater-goer, and therefore competent to judge of the merits of an attraction of this kind, and he soon saw that the company was an inferior one.

Being a diligent newspaper reader, the detective had read some glowing accounts of how good in their respective characters Miss Manchester and her company were, but he soon saw that the accounts were "puffs," as the false laudatory notices are called, and not genuine criticisms.

Miss Manchester was a pretty woman, a good singer, but a poor actress, and when the detective compared her to Lillian Russell, the original La Cigale in this country, the Englishwoman fell far short.

The best one in the troupe was the tenor, who was better both in singing and acting than the "bright particular star" of the organization.

And this young man, who, according to the programmes, was named Charles Barnard, would have produced a much better impression if he had not made it manifest by his actions that he had an extremely good opinion of himself.

"That is the man for my money!" the detective muttered to himself as the curtain descended on the second act.

"If I make his acquaintance and manage the affair rightly, it will not be a difficult matter to get out of him all he knows."

Then the thought came to the man-hunter that it would not be a bad idea to get into conversation with one of the ushers, for from him some information in regard to the troupe could be got.

The detective took advantage of the intermission to carry out this plan.

As it happened the usher whom he accosted was an agreeable young fellow, and inclined to be talkative.

The disguised man-hunter represented that he was connected with the stage, being a musician, and also at one time holding a position

in front of the house, so when he said that it struck him that both the "business" and the show were queer, the usher at once became communicative.

"The party haven't done any business since they struck town," the young man declared.

"And you are right about the show being queer," he continued. "And the old man ought not to have given them a date."

By the old man the usher meant the manager of the theater.

"The show may be all right for the jay towns out West, but it isn't the thing for New York, especially for this house."

"Down at some of the cheap-price shops they might have done well enough."

"I see that Morris Boltz is the manager, and he is one of the Boltz Brothers, isn't he?"

"Yes, he is a brother, but he isn't one of the brothers. He is a younger one, and don't amount to anything—no money, you know."

"How comes it that he is running this show then?"

"He's picked up an 'angel' somewhere. He is awful lucky in that way, always getting hold of some fellows with more money than brains to back his shows."

The signal for the beginning of the act brought the conversation to a close, but the detective had gained some information.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HUNTING DOWN THE "ANGEL."

"I RATHER think the backer—the man who has found the money for this venture, is the man I want," the detective mused, as he watched the performance.

"Now let me see how I will go ahead in this matter," he continued.

"First I will make the acquaintance of this young actor, Barnard; possibly from him I can learn who the moneyed man is, and then I will see Boltz, the manager."

"The game to play with him is to represent that I am anxious to buy an interest in the show."

"If he gets the idea in his head that there is a possibility that I may be induced to risk a thousand dollars or so in a theatrical enterprise, probably I can get the information that I desire."

Joe Phenix sat the performance through, and after leaving the theater, crossed to the opposite side of the street, where he could command a view of the stage-door of the theater.

He was on the watch for the appearance of the actor, Barnard.

In due time the young man came out, accompanied by another one of the actors.

They crossed the street and entered the saloon on the corner.

This was just what the bloodhound, anticipated.

He knew that a large number of the stage people craved a glass of beer as a "refreshment" after their performance.

The detective followed the pair into the saloon, and, as they ranged up along the bar, in a few well-chosen words accosted them.

He explained that he was a musician by profession, had been connected with the theater for a number of years, and so was well qualified to pass judgment upon a musical performance, then said how well pleased he had been with his—Mr. Barnard's—rendition of his character.

The young actor was delighted, and he responded with the air of a man who thought he was really a very clever fellow.

Then the disguised detective suggested that they sit down at one of the tables, and have a light lunch with something to "wash" it down.

This proposition met with immediate favor.

And while the three were enjoying the lunch, and the beer, the man-hunter got the knowledge he required.

This was Miss Manchester's first appearance at the head of an opera company in New York, although for three or four years she had done quite well in the West with her own troupe.

But in regard to the Western tours, Barnard could only speak from hearsay, for he had not played with the lady until the present engagement.

Then the seeker after information dropped

the careless remark that he supposed Boltz had succeeded in picking up an angel as usual.

The actors laughed, and Barnard replied that there wasn't any doubt that the manager had succeeded in making a "raise" out of somebody, for he never had any money of his own.

"Is the backer with the troupe?" the detective inquired, carelessly.

"No, for this time the man has kept in the background. There is an angel though, somewhere," Barnard asserted. "For I know that just before Boltz organized this troupe, he was without a dollar, as he had met with a hard run of luck."

"When he went into this thing he tried to engage me, and I told him promptly I didn't think there was any money in the show, so couldn't afford to risk the loss of my time."

"I was frank, you see, with him, for Morris and I are old acquaintances."

"Then he told me that everything was lovely and showed me a thousand in cash, also his contract with the Academy for fifty per cent. of the gross receipts, which satisfied me that the show could live for awhile, for Morris is as square as a die and always pays if he has the money."

"He must have got the cash from somebody, of course," Joe Phenix observed, reflectively.

"Oh, yes, but who that somebody is no one seems to know," Barnard suggested.

"Some friend of Miss Manchester's probably," the disguised detective suggested.

"Possibly some gentleman who has become fascinated by her beauty and talent," he continued.

"He doesn't seem to be much in evidence if he exists," the young actor insinuated.

"I suppose there are quite a number anxious to win her smiles," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Well, I don't think there are a great many," Barnard replied.

"She hasn't made much of a sensation in New York," he continued. "She is a pretty woman, but there are a hundred others in the business who are just as good-looking."

"Of course there are a certain number of young fools, Johnnies, as we call them, who are bound to run after every good-looking woman on the stage, if she amounts to anything."

"But no one man who seems to be particularly infatuated, eh?" the disguised detective inquired.

"How about those two swells who were in the box every night during the first week?" the other actor said.

"They went in pretty strong in the flower line, if you remember," the young fellow continued.

"Well, I suppose that might be called a case of genuine mash," Barnard remarked.

"Who were the two?" Joe Phenix asked.

"One is an Englishman named Captain MacIverson, and the other is this Jack Haversham, whose name has been in the papers so much lately in connection with the Haversham murder."

The detective was surprised by this intelligence.

"Do you think that either one of them is the man who found the money?" the man-hunter asked.

"Oh, I can't say. Manchester seems to be very sweet on Haversham, and he has been behind the scenes with the captain two or three times this week," Barnard answered.

The disguised detective did not pursue the subject further, for he did not wish to awaken suspicion, and then, too, he was satisfied he had gained all the information that the actors could give.

When the lunch was finished Joe Phenix bade his new-made friends adieu and departed.

"Now, then, for the manager!" he exclaimed.

He went to the box-office of the Academy of Music and inquired where Mr. Boltz was staying, explaining that he wished to see him on a matter of particular business.

"You will find him at Lugh's hotel on Fourteenth street," was the reply.

Joe Phenix knew that this house was a popular one with the foreign theatrical element, and as it was now half past five, he thought there was a good chance to catch the manager at his dinner.

The hotel was only a few minutes' walk from the theater, and the detective soon reached it.

He was fortunate enough to catch the manager just on the point of going into the restaurant for his dinner.

Boltz was a tall, thin young man, with a "hatchet" face and a consumptive look.

The disguised detective introduced himself, explained that he desired to invest a couple of thousand dollars in the theatrical business, and as he had been informed in one of the up-town theatrical agencies that he, Mr. Boltz, was open to negotiate for something of the kind, he had come to see him about the matter.

The manager professed to be surprised, and remarked that a man must not take much stock in the reports which are always current in theatrical circles.

He really hadn't any idea of taking a partner, still, as a business man, he was always ready to listen to a proposition.

The disguised detective then suggested that, if Mr. Boltz had not dined, they could take dinner together and discuss the matter at their leisure.

The manager thought this was an excellent idea, and so Joe Phenix ordered an extra-good dinner, with a bottle of the best wine the house afforded.

The man-hunter managed the affair to the best of his ability, but did not succeed in getting any information out of the manager.

In a dextrous way he said he had been led to think there was a chance for a speculation, as he understood Mr. Boltz's moneyed man was about to retire.

The manager said the rumor was without foundation, for he hadn't a partner, and never had one.

It was his own money which had put the show on the road.

Joe Phenix saw from the way in which the man spoke that it was useless to expect to get the truth from him, for he had evidently made up his mind to shield the unknown.

When the dinner was ended, Joe Phenix made an appointment to meet the manager on the next day, then took his departure.

"So far I have not been able to make any progress at all," the man-hunter mused.

"I will try Jack Haversham next and then this Captain MacIverson, and if I can't get any other information, I will put shadows on the woman."

Having come to this conclusion the detective hastened to his house, doffed his disguise, and assumed that of Carl, the valet.

After reaching the Haversham mansion he spoke to Jack, saying that he had heard a rumor that he was fascinated by the charms of Miss Manchester.

Jack laughingly admitted that he was carrying on a flirtation with the comic opera singer.

Joe Phenix then, in an incidental way, said that the theatrical people were wondering who it was that had found the money for the Boltz show.

Being entirely unsuspecting that there was any reason for secrecy, Jack revealed that Captain MacIverson had admitted to him that he had loaned the manager the money to start the comic opera troupe.

"At last I am on the track!" the detective exclaimed after the young man had departed. "It is this Scotch-English captain who is the mysterious man in the background, but is he the man whom the doctor seeks?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

A CONSULTATION.

ON the morning after the one on which took place the events recorded in our last chapter, Miss Manchester sat at her breakfast in the dining-room of her "flat."

The comic opera singer was not an early riser, for the clock upon the mantel-piece showed that it was a few minutes after ten.

Captain MacIverson's card was brought.

"Show him in," Miss Manchester directed. "I don't mind the captain, even if I am at breakfast, for he is an old acquaintance."

So careful were the pair that even to the servants the fiction was kept up that they were merely good friends.

The maid was the only servant at home, and after the captain was introduced Miss Manchester dispatched her to make some purchases.

This was so the two could hold a conference without danger of their conversation being overheard.

"This engagement is going to be a failure," the captain remarked with a gloomy shake of the head.

"Yes, I was afraid of it, if you remember."

"You were right."

"New York isn't the West; the competition here is terrible, and it needs an extra strong attraction to do any business."

"Well, you have always managed to draw, and it was my calculation that by going in with a hurrah, as these Americans say, we could get people to believe that the entertainment was something extra."

"The first week we did well enough, but now the houses have fallen off sadly."

"Yes, and the Academy manager is beginning to 'kick,' as Boltz says."

"The engagement was for a six weeks' run, but the Academy man says that next week must wind it up," the captain continued.

"In fact he would not let the show go on beyond this week if he could get anything else to put on," MacIverson added.

"Well, so long as both the theater and the company are losing money what is the use of keeping on?"

"I should think the quicker we closed up the better," Miss Manchester argued.

"Yes, but it will have a bad effect on our other engagements," the captain replied.

"Here we will have three weeks open time, for going on the idea that there wasn't any doubt that we would play six weeks here, Philadelphia was booked with Baltimore to follow."

"Yes, I know, and now we will have three weeks to fill in somewhere or else remain idle," the prima donna remarked, thoughtfully.

"Boltz is talking about putting in the time in one night stands, but I am afraid of these eastern towns for they are showed to death; but then if we close up it will hurt us for it will soon get out that we closed on account of bad business."

"We can't put forward the excuse that we are not satisfied with our company and have closed to reorganize."

"That is a very old chestnut, but it will have to do in this case, for it is better than going into the one night towns and losing a pot of money."

"Oh, yes."

"Then, too, I have some urgent reasons against leaving the city for two or three weeks, so it will be far better for us to shut up and remain idle."

"Well, as far as the money is concerned I think it will be wise," Miss Manchester remarked.

"By the way, how do you get on with Jack Haversham?" the captain asked, abruptly.

"Oh, all right; we are having a desperate flirtation, for I have tried my best to carry out your wishes."

"Done your best to ensnare him, eh?"

"Yes, although I must admit that the task is not at all to my liking," the prima donna remarked with a wearied look upon her face.

"How is that?" the captain queried, affecting to be surprised. "Jack is a fine, dashy, handsome fellow, and I should think you would be flattered by the attentions of such a man."

"Don't you know, Dudley, that there is only one man in all this wide world that I care for, and that is yourself?" the woman exclaimed, abandoning her seat and kneeling by his side.

"Ah, yes, you are a good little girl, Bessie, and you have stuck to me through thick and thin!" the captain replied, stroking her hair with his hand.

"You are the only man for whom I have ever cared, and if I lost you I do not believe that I would ever learn to love any one again!"

"You are a faithful soul, Bessie; there is no mistake about that!"

"And feeling as I do in this way toward you, can't you understand what a dreadful task it is for me to encourage the attentions

of this young man?" the actress exclaimed, her voice trembling with emotion.

"Yes, I suppose the task is a difficult one, but I can assure you that I have a good reason for asking you to undertake it, or else I should never have done so."

"I supposed so, of course, but I did not question you," the woman remarked.

"I am in the habit of doing as you say without asking you why or wherefore," she continued.

"You are a jewel of a girl, and that is the reason why we have always got on so well together," the captain remarked, bending over and kissing her tenderly, while she twined her arms around his neck.

"I haven't led quite as good a life as I ought to have done," MacIverson remarked, in a reflective way. "But when the final account comes to be taken, I hope the fact that I have always taken good care of you, and tried to make you happy, will outweigh some of my sins."

"Oh, yes, it surely will," the woman responded, rising, and as she did so she moved her chair to the side of the one in which the captain sat, getting as near to him as she could.

Then, resuming her seat, she passed her arm in an affectionate manner around MacIverson and leaned her head upon his shoulder.

"Well, the time has come when I can allow you to know the kind of game that I am playing," the schemer remarked.

"You have read about this Haversham murder, of course?" he added.

"Yes; it was dreadful."

"The old fellow was worth two or three millions, and after I became acquainted with Jack Haversham, and learned that fact, I set to work to contrive a game so that I might get at some of the money."

"You see, my dear, I had a presentiment that we were not going to make any money out of this theatrical speculation, for, as the gamblers say, 'things have not been coming our way' lately."

"Yes, that is true," and the woman shook her head sadly.

"The public taste seems to be changing; the theater-goers are apparently tired of comic opera, for we have barely made a living during the past two years."

"It is very strange, and I work so hard, too!" Miss Manchester declared.

"Oh, it isn't your fault," the captain rejoined. "The public is capricious, and sometimes it is an extremely difficult matter to coax the ducats out of the pockets of the multitude."

"In order to retrieve our fortunes, I tried to speculate a little, but luck seemed to be against me, and I couldn't make a winning to save me; but after I made Jack Haversham's acquaintance and got on intimate terms with him, so that I found out just how he was situated, I thought I saw a chance to pick up some big money."

"Ah! wouldn't it be delightful if you only could succeed in doing so!"

"Oh, yes. Now this is the way the matter stood. You comprehend that Jack is one of those open-hearted fellows whose secrets are easily read?"

The woman nodded assent.

"You know, of course, that the old cotton-broker had an only daughter, who has now come in for all his money?"

"Yes."

"Well, after Jack introduced me to the house, I met the girl, and I very soon got the idea that she liked Jack quite well enough to marry him if he would only say the word, and he, too, seemed to be fond of the girl, but refrained from trying to win her."

"That was strange."

"It did not take me long to find out why this was so. The father objected to the union, and he was wise enough to put the matter to Jack in such a way that the young man felt that he was in honor bound not to attempt to marry the girl."

"Ah, yes, I comprehend."

"The cotton-broker was a close old file enough but was liberal to a fault with his daughter," the captain continued.

"All she had to do was to ask for money to get it, and feeling sure of how she felt toward Jack, I laid a trap for him."

"He confided to me that he was short of

funds on account of a losing speculation in which he had been engaged, and I arranged with an old Jew money-lender to offer to accommodate him with a loan.

"He took the bait, and the money; then I had the Jew's men nail him at the Academy; that was my little game to force him to borrow the money of you."

"I wondered at the time that you did it," the actress remarked.

"It was to get him in your power—to play you off against the Haversham girl.

"It was my design in the character of Jack's friend, to represent to her that you, a deep, designing woman, had contrived to entangle Jack, but by the use of a good bit of money you could be bought off."

"It was a cunning scheme!"

"Yes, and now that the girl is her own mistress, with her money at her command, the chances for success are increased.

"Now you comprehend why I wanted you to encourage the young man."

"Yes, I comprehend."

"The time will soon come when—as Jack's friend, you understand—I will go to Miss Victorine and tell her how you have ensnared Jack, then explain that he has behaved so imprudently that if you choose to sue him for breach of promise he would undoubtedly have to either marry you or else pay a big sum as damages."

"Oh, what an ideal!"

"It will work, though!" the captain declared. "Her jealousy will be excited, and when I suggest that for eight or ten thousand dollars I can induce you to leave the country I think the chances are great that she will be glad to pay the money."

Miss Manchester agreed that the scheme seemed likely to succeed.

The reappearance of the maid ended the interview and the captain took his departure.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE JEW'S SCHEME.

THE captain proceeded from the house of the actress to Broadway, and as he turned into that thoroughfare he encountered Michael Orloff.

"Aha, captain, you are the very man I wanted to see!" the Jew exclaimed.

"Well, sir, here I am."

"Come in and have a drink—I want to talk this Haversham case over with you," Orloff remarked.

The captain was agreeable, so the two entered the nearest saloon, went into the back room and took possession of a table in a quiet corner.

"Are you going to stand a small bottle?" inquired MacIverson with a humorous twinkle in his eye.

"Ah, my goodness! What do you take me for?" the Jew exclaimed.

"Isn't beer or whisky, or a cocktail, good enough for you?"

"Orloff, it is very plain to me that you will never die of enlargement of the heart, but you can make it a bottle of Bass's ale and I will be satisfied."

The ale was ordered, it was served, and then, after the pair tried its flavor, Orloff said:

"My dear captain, I have not been able to do anything at all with this Haversham case."

"Well, all the rest of the detectives are in the same boat."

"As far as I can make out, the man must have been killed by either this Jack Haversham or by the daughter."

"Ah, but it is a terrible thing you know to accuse a daughter of having had a hand in the murder of her father."

"Yes, I know that, but she is a peculiar high-strung girl, and she has got the courage to do the deed if she made up her mind to such a thing."

"I fully agree with you there."

"But I don't really think she committed the crime," Orloff explained.

"My idea is that there was a grand family row, and that Jack lost his temper and strangled the old man in a fit of passion."

"It is probable," MacIverson remarked, reflectively. "But if the crime was committed in that way, without witnesses, it will never be possible to bring the deed home to the murderer."

"Yes, I know that it is a very difficult case," Orloff admitted. "But I think I shall try a little bluff game on the young man."

"I shall go to him and say in a mysterious way that I have made certain discoveries—and that is the truth, for I have. Why, on the very night of the murder there was a man with a warrant at the Academy of Music, ready to nail Jack Haversham on the charge of obtaining money under false pretenses!"

"You don't mean it?" MacIverson cried, as though he was utterly amazed by the revelation.

"It is a fact!" Orloff declared. "For I was talking with the man who was after him."

"It is amazing!"

"He contrived to get out of the scrape in some way, probably borrowed money from somebody, and so succeeded in squaring the thing, but, you will observe, he was in a hole, and hard-pushed for money."

"Yes, apparently."

"Well, since the death of the old cotton-broker he has paid up."

"Ah, where did he get the money?"

"That is just the question!" the Jew exclaimed. "My idea was that the old man had two or three thousand dollars in the safe, which, if you remember, was found open?"

"Yes, yes."

"And if he didn't get the money out of the safe then the girl must have given it to him."

"That is possible."

"To my thinking there is no doubt that either he or the girl is responsible for the death of the old man, and no matter which ever one did it, the other has a guilty knowledge."

"That seems likely."

"Now I am going to try a grand bluff!" Orloff explained.

"Going to tell him, you know, that I have made some discoveries which astonish me, and I thought it would be wise to come and see him about the matter before going on, for it seemed likely to me that if I kept on, some unpleasant family secrets might be revealed."

"Ah, yes, that is well put, going on the old idea that every family has a skeleton in its closet," the captain suggested.

"If he is the man who did the job the chances are that he will take the alarm, and if he shows any signs of this kind then I will suggest that as I am very busy I would prefer not to trouble myself about this particular case any longer, but I think it would only be right for me to receive pay for the work which I have already done."

"Ah, yes, that is a nice and agreeable way to put it," the captain observed with an approving nod.

"Much better than coming at him in a bulldog way with a demand for so much money, or else you will be compelled to go ahead," he continued.

"If I make the strike in the right way it ought to pan out a couple of thousand, eh?" Orloff asked.

"Oh, I don't know. It depends entirely upon how the man takes it," the captain replied with a doubtful shake of the head.

"He may take it ugly, you know, confident that it will not be possible for you to prove anything."

"And if he goes on that tack, you will not be able to make a raise."

"It is worth trying though, eh?"

"Oh yes."

"And if you were me wouldn't you go into it?" the Jew asked, evidently placing considerable weight on the captain's opinion.

"Yes, I certainly would!"

"I had an idea that you would think the scheme was a good one."

"But you must be very careful how you carry the scheme through, you know," the captain continued.

"Oh, yes, I understand that," Orloff replied. "You can rely upon my going ahead in the most cautious manner."

"It all depends upon how the scheme is handled. It looks as though the murder was committed in such a way that it is not possible for the crime to be brought home to the murderer, still a bold bluff may make the man think you have got hold of something which will trouble him."

"It will do no harm to try it and if I make a raise I will whack it up with you."

"Good luck go with you!" the captain exclaimed as they rose to depart.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CAPTAIN IS DISTURBED.

"WHEN will you try this little game?" MacIverson asked, after he and his companion reached the street.

"Right away! There isn't anything like striking when the iron is hot."

"Very true," the captain assented. "In a matter of this kind, when a man makes up his mind to go into it, nothing can be gained by delay."

"Where will you see him—at his downtown office?"

"No, I think not. I will wait until he gets home and call upon him at his house."

"He is sticking very tightly to business now, I am told," the captain remarked.

"When the old cotton-broker was alive, Jack was not remarkable for his attention to his duties, and no one expected that he would ever amount to anything in the mercantile line; but now they say that since he has taken entire charge of the business he seems like another man, and is really developing remarkable business qualifications."

"No one thought that he had it in him, eh?"

"He has certainly astonished all his business acquaintances."

"I don't know much about the man, but my idea was that he was inclined to be a little on the high-roller order."

"He was going on a pretty rapid pace, but this affair seems to have sobered him considerably."

"Do you suppose that his conscience troubles him?" the Jew suggested with a shrewd look.

"You know that that sort of thing acts in a different way on different men," Orloff continued with the air of a man who thought he knew all about the matter.

"Some fellows plunge into drink and dissipation in order to forget, while others pitch into business so as to avoid thinking of the past."

"Possibly you have hit on the truth," the captain remarked, reflectively. "And if you can produce the proper impression on the man you may be able to make something out of it."

"I will call on him about seven to-night, so as to give him time to get through his dinner and yet catch him before he goes out."

"That is a good idea," MacIverson remarked. "And as I am curious to learn how the game will work, suppose you come to the saloon, where we had our ale, as soon as you get through with him."

"All right!"

"I will be there from half-past seven. It ought not to take you more than an hour to come to an understanding with him."

"Oh, no! we ought to be able to fix the business up in good shape in an hour."

"I will wait for you until you come."

"By the way, I neglected to speak of it before," the Jew remarked, abruptly. "But have you been able to get any information about this Miss Manchester?"

"Nothing yet."

"I met the doctor to-day, and he seemed annoyed when I told him that none of my agents had been able to get at anything—I spoke, you know, as though I had about a dozen men employed on the case," the Jew remarked with a grin.

"That, of course, is the proper kind of 'steer' to always give in a case of this kind," the captain observed, approvingly.

"As I said he seemed decidedly annoyed and said that I ought to put better men on the case, for it should not be such a difficult matter to get at the facts."

"Well, really, I think I have done fully as well as any one could do," the captain declared. "And I doubt if a dozen sleuth-hounds could have found out any more than I did."

"You must represent to this earnest seeker after knowledge that it isn't an easy matter to get at the exact facts in a case of this kind," MacIverson continued.

"A man must go back ten years, which is a pretty long time, and as the affair happened in England, it is a hard job to get hold of

people who know anything at all about the matter.

"I have questioned all the English actors I came across, and even gone out of my way to hunt them up, but none of them know anything about the woman, excepting that it was Leslie who put her on the stage and pushed her ahead."

"Did you suggest that you understood there was some rich swell in the background who paid Leslie to make the woman an actress?"

"Oh, yes, I did not neglect that point, but none of the actors believed it."

"In fact, they laughed at the idea; English swells, with plenty of money, were not in the habit of taking young women and going to the trouble of hiring actors to make actresses out of them, so they said."

"It doesn't seem to be very probable; but the doctor appears to be certain that Leslie is not the man he wants."

"Some men are peculiar about a thing of this kind," the captain observed, in a thoughtful way.

"When they get an idea into their heads they are stubborn and obstinate, even if they haven't the least bit of proof to back up the notion."

"He is so dissatisfied about the matter that I should not be surprised if he employs some other detective to look into the case."

"Well, he may hire a dozen, and I would be willing to bet a good, round sum that they will not be able to do any better than I have done."

By this time the two had arrived at the building where the detective had his office, and they parted at the door, the Jew going up-stairs while the captain kept on down Broadway.

There was a serious look on MacIverson's swarthy face.

"If this keeps on I shall be obliged to see if I can't put a stop to it," he muttered.

"Although my first blow was a failure, a second one may be more successful."

"It was just a lucky accident which brought the detective to his aid, and the chances are a thousand to one that such a thing couldn't happen again, for the lightning seldom strikes twice in the same place."

By this time he had arrived in front of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and there encountered Morris Boltz.

"Come into the reading-room of the hotel, where we can talk in quiet; I have something to say to you," the manager said.

The captain followed the theatrical speculator, and the two took chairs in a corner of the apartment.

"It was your desire to keep secret the fact that you had put up the money to run this comic opera show?" Boltz remarked.

"Oh, yes, for I just went into the thing for a sort of a lark, you know," MacIverson explained.

"The fact is, my dear fellow, I hadn't any idea of doing anything of the kind until I happened to make the acquaintance, just by accident, you know, of that friend of yours who introduced me to you, and it was he who put the idea into my head."

"You see he told me what a smart fellow you were in the theatrical line, and how you had a chance to put a comic opera company on the road, but lacked the necessary funds, and, just on the spur of the moment, you know, I said I wouldn't mind putting up a thousand, as a sort of 'flyer,' as you Americans say, but I would not like to have any one know anything about it."

"Yes, that is just what he said to me, and then I came to you about the matter."

"Well, now, the reason I have reverted to this affair is that a man, who looked like a German professor, hunted me up yesterday, and said that as he had been informed that my 'backer' was about to retire he would like to buy an interest in the company."

"How did the man know that you had a backer?" the captain asked, quickly.

"That is about what I asked him, and I said I was running the show on my own money."

"He replied that he heard the report at one of the theatrical agencies."

"But I don't see how that could be, for the affair has been kept a profound secret."

"Yes, I haven't said a word to any one, and when the party who introduced you to me asked if we had made a deal, I replied in

the negative, and told him a broker friend had let me into a lucky stock speculation, so I had funds of my own enough to go ahead on."

"I was to see this party this morning; I always talk sweet to all these prospective angels, even if I am so situated that I cannot make a deal with them."

"He showed up all right, but we didn't come to any arrangement, and after he was gone, when I came to think the matter over, I arrived at the conclusion that he was a fraud."

"He didn't come to see me with any idea of going into the show business, but what he was after was to discover if any man had put up any money for the troupe, and who he was."

"A very strange affair!"

"Isn't it?" the manager exclaimed. "My first idea was that some old creditor of mine had put up the job, trying to find out if it was worth while to go for me, for I am satisfied the man was doing a little detective work."

"It certainly looks like it!"

"But I don't think that it is any man after me, for I can't think of anybody likely to do anything of the kind, and then the thought came to me that it might be somebody trying to pry into your affairs."

"No, I don't think so," the captain replied, in an innocent way. "I know of no one who would be apt to trouble their heads about the matter."

"I thought I would speak to you about the affair, for it has puzzled me."

"Yes, it was wise, but it is my impression that it does not amount to anything. It is probably some busybody, with nothing better to occupy his time."

This ended the conversation, and the two parted, the captain being decidedly disturbed, although he did not show it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOW IT TURNED OUT.

ORLOFF proceeded to carry out the programme which he had described to the captain.

Promptly at the time which he had determined upon he went to the Haversham mansion, and sent in his card to Jack Haversham, with the request for a private interview, as he wished to see him upon important business.

As it happened, the young man was alone; Victorine was up-stairs with some young lady friends, and Colonel Jim having drank more wine at dinner than was good for him—which was his usual custom, much to the annoyance of both Victorine and Jack—had been lugged up-stairs by the butler to his own room.

As soon as Jack received the card he recognized that the owner was the private detective who had been employed by the cotton-brokers, with the hope of solving the mystery which surrounded the death of Arnold Haversham.

The young man told the servant to wait for a moment, and then he sought the disguised detective, who was in the library, looking over the evening newspapers.

Jack explained who Orloff was, and how he had been engaged by the cotton-brokers.

"I know all about the man," Joe Phenix replied. "And haven't a particularly good opinion of him, either."

"He is rather a sharp fellow but one of that kind who in endeavoring to be extra cunning often overreaches himself; then, too, from certain business transactions, I know that he is utterly unscrupulous."

"In fact, a man who will bear watching all the time," the man-hunter remarked in conclusion.

"I cannot imagine what the man wants with me, for I have not had anything to do with him."

"Possibly, after information connected with the tragedy," Joe Phenix suggested.

"I will receive him in this room," Jack observed.

"You can go into the inner apartment, and by leaving the door ajar you will be able to overhear all that is said."

"Pardon me, but is that wise?" the detective asked. "He may have some private business which it would not be advisable for me to hear."

"Ob, no!" Jack replied, immediately.

"The man can't have anything to say to me as private as all that, and I would prefer that you should hear what he has to say for himself."

"Just as you like; it doesn't make any difference to me."

Then Joe Phenix retired to the inner room and the young man instructed the servant to show the visitor into the library.

The Jew entered with an affable smirk.

"You must excuse the liberty I have taken in calling upon you, Mr. Haversham, but I have a little business matter of some importance which I wish to speak to you about," he remarked with an obsequious bow.

"I am ready to listen to you, sir; pray, be seated."

"I presume that you have heard of me through Mr. Dalrymple, as he remarked, after making an engagement with me, that he should inform you in regard to the matter?"

"Yes, Mr. Dalrymple did tell me of your engagement."

"I am not a man who makes a practice of boasting in regard to my achievements, but in my particular line I have been quite successful."

The young man simply nodded.

"By the way, I neglected to speak of it before, but I suppose there is no danger of our conversation being overheard?" and the Jew cast a suspicious glance around the room.

"You need not fear to speak with the utmost freedom, sir."

"Because what I am going to say is very important, and it is a rather delicate matter," and Orloff lowered his voice and cast another cautious glance around, just as though he feared that the very walls had ears.

"And it concerns me?" Jack asked, a puzzled expression on his face.

"Well, that is a matter which must be left entirely to your decision," and then the Jew nodded his head in an extremely mysterious way.

"All right; go ahead!"

"As soon as Mr. Dalrymple employed me on this murder case, I proceeded to make a most careful examination," the Jew declared.

"I have an extremely able corps of assistants, and I put every one of them on this case, instructing them to spare neither time nor expense to get at the truth."

Again Jack nodded, as the visitor paused and looked at him as though he expected him to say something.

"And I took hold of the matter myself, you understand, and went in as if my very existence depended upon getting at the heart of the mystery."

Jack was beginning to tire of this flow of language which did not amount to anything.

"Come to the point!" he exclaimed. "Have you made any discoveries?"

"Oh, yes!" the Jew replied, in the most confident way.

"Well, how is it that you come to me?" the young man asked, rather surprised by the circumstance.

"I should think you would have made your report to Mr. Dalrymple who engaged you."

"Ah, my dear Mr. Haversham, there are wheels within wheels, you know!" the Jew responded in an extremely mysterious manner.

"As I said in the beginning, this is a delicate matter, and I concluded that I had better see you first in regard to it."

"Really, I don't see why you should!" the young man exclaimed.

"This murder is one of those which we professional man-hunters term an inside case," Orloff explained with an air of great importance.

"I understand what you mean," Jack remarked, a trifle impatiently.

"I have read all the theories which these ingenious newspaper men have promulgated in regard to the tragedy."

"They call it an inside job because there is no evidence to show that the house was forcibly entered by any one on the night when the tragedy occurred."

"Yes, exactly! that is correct."

"Well, you are not claiming that this is a discovery which you have made?"

"Oh, no."

"Well, what discoveries have you made?"

"Ah, that is what a lawyer would call a leading question," Orloff remarked in a meditative way.

"But you come here to give me information in regard to the matter, didn't you?" exclaimed the young man very much puzzled by the strange behavior of his visitor.

And the Jew on his part was surprised, too, at the way that Jack was acting.

In his mind there was no doubt that the young man, if he was not the actual murderer of the old cotton-broker, had a guilty knowledge of his death, and he expected to see him manifest some uneasiness when he began to hint that he had secured a clue.

But as Jack did not, the Jew came to the conclusion that he had not spoken plainly enough.

"Oh, my dear sir, I have got right at the facts!" Orloff exclaimed in a boasting way.

"Apparently it is a most mysterious affair, but when a man learns certain things, the mystery is not half as deep as it appears to be.

"You understand, Mr. Haversham, the party who did the job thinks all the tracks are covered up so nicely that it will not be possible for any one to get at the truth, but there never was one of these cases yet where the party didn't make a mistake and leave a clue open."

"Ah! you have secured one, then?"

And Jack evinced such a lively interest that the Jew set him down as being the best actor that he had ever come across.

"Well, I am not a man to boast about such things!" Orloff replied, with a grave shake of the head.

"But the affair has turned out so strangely that I don't care to go on, for if I was to make public the things which I have discovered, it would be a terrible shock to everybody, so, after thinking the matter over, I thought I would come to you and tell you that I wanted to stop.

"It was my idea, you know, that when you found out how I was situated you would be willing to pay me a fair price so I wouldn't be at the loss of my time.

"A couple of thousand, it struck me, would be about the right thing," the Jew said, in conclusion.

For a moment Jack stared at the man in utter amazement, and then he exclaimed.

"Well, if this isn't the most ridiculous idea that I ever heard of!

"Why, man, I wouldn't give you a red cent!" the young fellow continued, indignantly.

"That would be the same as shielding the murderer!"

"You don't mean to say that you want me to go on and bring out all the facts, no matter who is hurt?" the Jew exclaimed in an ugly way, rising as he spoke.

"Yes, that is exactly what I mean!"

"Maybe you think that I can't do it!" Orloff cried, defiantly.

"I haven't thought anything about it, but if you have any clue to the murderer, it is a duty you owe to the world to drag the criminal to justice!

"And if you can succeed in doing it you will receive over seven times two thousand dollars. The money will be gladly paid, too!"

"It is all right if you want it that way; I am agreeable, and you mustn't blame me if the shock of the exposure is an awful one!"

"You go ahead without fear or favor and produce the guilty party if you can!" exclaimed the young man, also rising.

"It will not take me long to do it!" the Jew declared, moving toward the door.

"The quicker you accomplish the task, the better I will be pleased!" Jack replied.

Then touching the bell to summon the footman, he had Orloff shown to the door.

The Jew departed, greatly-disgusted at the total failure of his plan.

The disguised detective made his appearance after Orloff departed.

"What do you think of that fellow?" Jack exclaimed.

"He is a rascal, as I always believed. It was his idea that you knew something about the murder, and he thought he could scare you into buying his silence!" Joe Phenix replied.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A DISCOVERY.

JACK HAVERSHAM meditated over the matter for a few moments.

"Well, now, really I am not so smart as I gave myself credit for being," he remarked. "For although I understood that the fellow was trying a bull-dozing game, yet it did not enter my mind that he suspected that I was the man who committed the crime.

"I comprehend, of course, that he meant to insinuate that I was inclined to shield the murderer, but I did not think he was charging me with the deed."

"Well, he did not in so many words, but that was the meaning of his insinuations."

"I believe you are right!" Jack exclaimed in a tone of conviction.

"By Jove! it was a lucky thing for the fellow that I was so thick-headed as not to comprehend what he was driving at, for if I had I would not have stood upon much ceremony in kicking him into the street!" the young man declared, in heat.

"It is just as I told you. In endeavoring to be extra sharp he makes some fearful blunders," the veteran detective observed.

"In this case, as he was not able to find a clue to the doer of the deed, he had to fall back upon surmise, and so he went through the old process of reasoning—who would profit most by the death of the man?"

"Yes, yes, I see; and his suspicions immediately fell upon Victorine and myself."

"Exactly; and so he ventured upon a bold bluff in the hope that if you did know something about the matter you might be weak-minded enough to believe he had made some important discoveries, and so be frightened into paying him to abandon the case."

"Why, the fellow is a regular scoundrel!" Jack declared.

"Yes, as I told you, he is utterly unscrupulous; but as he is always very careful how he plays his games, he passes for an honest man and has a good reputation as a detective.

"To my thinking, though, his ability is small, for since he has been in business here in the city he has never distinguished himself in any important cases; still, I may be prejudiced, for it is an old saying, you know, that two of a trade seldom agree," the veteran man-hunter remarked, with a smile.

"Well, from what I have seen of the fellow, I am satisfied that your estimate of him is correct, and in this affair he certainly has not done anything."

"To do the man justice, it must be admitted that all the rest of us are in the same box," Joe Phenix observed.

"I have not questioned you about the matter, but is it true that you have not succeeded in getting any clues since you have been an inmate of the house?"

"No, not a single one!"

"As far as the evidence goes to show it is an inside job," the detective continued.

"And the principal reason for my taking up my quarters in the house was so that I might be able to study at my leisure, and without being suspected, the characters of the servants."

"Yes, I supposed that you had some idea of that kind."

"It is a common custom for first-class crooks to work in gangs," Joe Phenix explained.

"And when these fellows get their eyes on a house where they think a rich booty can be picked up, one of the first moves they make is to get one of the gang in the house as a servant."

"Yes, I comprehend, and this fellow not only is ready to admit the gang, but gets information as to where the portable valuables are kept."

"Exactly! that is the way the game is worked. But in this case there isn't anything suspicious about any of the servants."

"None of them are new-comers," Jack observed. "There isn't one in the house who has not been here for a year or more."

"I have studied them all carefully, and have not detected anything wrong."

"It is a most mysterious affair, and the

more one examines it the greater becomes the puzzle.

"And it is strange how these things happen, too," Jack continued, in a reflective way.

"On the night of the murder I went to the Academy of Music with a friend of mine, Captain Dudley MacIverson, and did not get home until late, but if I had remained in the house that night, possibly the tragedy would not have occurred."

"Perhaps not."

"And it was just a foolish fancy on my part which took me to the theater. This friend had taken a box for the week; he is a great admirer of this comic opera star, Miss Bessie Manchester, and wanted my assistance in throwing bouquets, and I was weak enough to become slightly infatuated with the woman myself and so I went."

The veteran detective was on the alert at once.

"The captain was infatuated also, eh? Well, I wonder at his bringing another man into the field."

"I was rather surprised myself, until the captain admitted to me that he had a pecuniary interest in the matter as he had advanced the money to start the troupe."

Joe Phenix was surprised that in this unexpected way he should come in possession of the information which he sought, still it was not the first time that such a thing had happened.

"Ah, yes, I comprehend, and he was trying the old theatrical method of 'working' the public."

"Yes, the captain is a jolly fellow, and went into the thing as a sort of a lark."

"Who is this captain?" Joe Phenix inquired, carelessly. "I thought I was acquainted with all the noted men about town, but his name is not familiar to me."

"He is a stranger in the city," Jack Haversham explained. "I was introduced to him at one of the clubs. He is a Scotch-Irishman, really a capital fellow; has been an English officer, and also served in South America. A man who has been all over the world."

"Ah, yes, I see, a sort of 'rolling stone,' as the saying is. But how did he come to be interested in this troupe?"

"The manager is an old acquaintance of his," the young man explained. "And when the captain happened accidentally to meet him in New York, and learned that he was short of money, MacIverson, just on the spur of the moment, you know, advanced the cash."

"Ah, yes, I see," the veteran detective observed. "I suppose, too, that he was attracted by Miss Manchester, for according to the newspaper accounts she is a very fascinating young woman."

"He is an admirer, but is not particularly struck, for he has done all he could to help me along in my little flirtation with her."

"The captain says that he is not a marrying man. So there isn't any use of his laying siege to this stage beauty."

"Well, surely you haven't any serious intentions regarding the actress!" the detective exclaimed.

"Perhaps I am speaking too plainly, Mr. Haversham," Joe Phenix hastened to say.

"For of course it isn't any of my business," he added, noticing that the young man seemed to be a little embarrassed.

"Mr. Phenix, although our acquaintance is of recent date, yet, somehow, I have come to look upon you in the light of an old friend, and I have never yet met a man in my life whose advice I would prize more highly!" Jack declared, speaking with warm impulsiveness.

"I am very glad indeed that I have made so good an impression on you," the veteran detective remarked.

"A man ought not to praise himself, you know," Joe Phenix continued. "But this I will say, many men have sought my advice, and I don't know one of them who was the worse for having followed it."

"Of course your affair with this actress is no concern of mine, but if you had asked my advice on the subject I would have recommended you to be careful and not allow your impulses to run away with your judgment."

"Mind you! I am not saying anything against this woman simply because she is an actress."

"I am no believer in the opinion of the bigots who think that all people connected with the stage are more or less tainted, because I know that it is not true.

"There are fully as good men and women on the stage as there are off of it, and there isn't anything in the stage life not conducive to morality.

"But there are some facts connected with the past life of this Miss Bessie Manchester which render her unfit to be the wife of such a man as yourself."

"You astonish me!" Jack exclaimed. "I hadn't any idea that you were acquainted with the lady."

"A man in my line becomes acquainted with many strange facts in the course of his career," the detective remarked with one of his peculiar smiles.

"I would not have spoken about the matter if I had not supposed from your words that you were in danger of becoming compromised with her."

Then, on the impulse of the moment, Jack confided to the detective that he really loved Victorine, but he thought he ought not to woo her on account of the ideas which her father had in regard to the matter, so he had striven to forget one woman by pursuing another.

"My dear sir, in my opinion no man has a right to exact a promise of that kind from another. He took an unfair advantage of you.

"If you love the girl, tell her all the circumstances and ask her opinion about the matter."

"You are right, and I will do it before I sleep this night!" Jack Haversham declared.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

UNEXPECTED INFORMATION.

JOE PHENIX applauded the resolution, and then the conversation was interrupted by the footman, who brought the message that there was a man at the door who said his name was John Damson, formerly butler to Mr. Arnold Haversham, and he wished to see Mr. Jack Haversham on important business.

"Oh, yes, Damson!" the young man exclaimed. "He was butler here for a good ten years, and retired from service to set up as a farmer. Show him in."

In a few moments the applicant was ushered into the apartment.

He was a man well advanced in years, a typical Englishman, stout and red-faced.

Jack shook hands with him, for he had a high respect for the man, and invited him to be seated.

"I sent you word that I had come to see you on an important bit of business," the old fellow said, with a questioning glance at the disguised detective as he seated himself.

"You can speak freely; this is my confidential man," Jack replied.

"I would have come before, only I didn't hear about the death of my old master until three days ago," the old fellow explained. "I only take the weekly newspapers, so the news is a week or two old when it gets to me."

"Yes, I see."

"The death of Mr. Arnold was an awful affair," Damson remarked, with a melancholy shake of the head.

"I was quite upset when I read about it," he continued.

"Don't suppose you have got any clue to the murderer yet?" he added.

"No, none."

"The newspapers said there didn't seem to be any motive for the murder—it couldn't be committed by a man who wanted to rob the house, for there wasn't anything missing."

"Yes, that is true, for the jewelry was all on the body, and his wallet in his pocket."

"I was with Mr. Haversham for a great many years, and, of course, was well acquainted with his habits, and he didn't carry the bulk of his money in his wallet, but in a roll which he always carried in the upper left-hand pocket of his vest, and, as a rule, he seldom had less than a hundred dollars in the roll."

"Yes, now that you speak of it, I remember that he did use to carry a roll of bills in his vest-pocket," Jack assented. "But, somehow, I did not happen to recall the fact before, and it was very stupid in me, too."

"Well, that was one thing that was missing," the old man said.

"Yes, that is correct," the young man replied. "No money was found except the few dollars in the wallet."

"Let me see: as near as I can remember, it was about three years ago that Mr. Haversham called me and Benjamin Mullins, who was then the footman, into this room one evening, and said he wanted us to witness his signature to his will which he had just made out."

"His will, eh?" exclaimed Jack, deeply interested.

"Yes, sir, his will, and he made the remark that if a wealthy man wanted to have a will over which there couldn't be any dispute he ought to draw it out himself, for just so sure as he trusted to lawyers to draw the document they would put so many legal terms and useless stuff in it that it would puzzle anybody to tell what the thing was about."

"Yes, that is like Mr. Haversham; he did not like lawyers, and never would have anything to do with one if he could help himself," the young man remarked.

"He signed the will, then Benjamin and myself put our signatures on the paper, and he put it in the safe, so if no will was found that was taken too along with the roll of bills."

"It is possible that he might have changed his mind and destroyed the paper, but I don't think that is likely," Joe Phenix observed, slowly.

"No, sir, I don't think that it is at all probable, for he was a man who was very set in his ways," Damson observed.

"I don't suppose that you have any idea of the contents of the will?" the disguised detective remarked.

"Well, sir, to tell you the honest truth, I have," the old man remarked with a sly look on his broad face.

"Mr. Haversham used to take a little more liquor than was good for him once in awhile," Damson explained. "And I always waited up to see that he got to bed all right, and one night he became talkative as I was undressing him."

"He wasn't talking to me, you understand, but was talking to himself; the liquor had muddled him up so he imagined he was alone, and from what he said I gathered that he had got a letter from his brother, Colonel Jim, who was in India at the time."

"You threaten me do you, you ruffianly swash-buckler, you disgrace to your family?" he exclaimed. "I remember every word, gentlemen, just as well as though it was yesterday!" the old man declared.

"That is fortunate, for I have an idea that these apparently wild and disjointed words may be of the utmost importance," Joe Phenix observed.

"So pray be careful and give as correct an account as possible."

"Oh, yes, I will," Damson replied. "Then he went on: 'You are a miserable wretch, and although you did advance the money to start me in business, yet I paid it back, and have helped you a dozen times since, so you have no claims upon me, but for all that I am going to do something for you if I happen to die before you do, for I don't want it said that one of our name was forced to go to the poor house in his old age.'"

"I have put your name in my will for a couple of thousand a year, which is ample for your support, and your boy I shall give twenty thousand outright too; the rest will go to Victorine, but tied up so if she gets a worthless husband he can't spend it."

"Yes, that is the way I will fix it, and if you come from India to have a reckoning with me, as you threaten, you will find that I will be prepared to meet you, but not a cent over two thousand a year will I allow you!"

"Then his mind seemed to wander and he appeared to think he was talking to a female, for he said: 'My poor girl, I will do all I can for you. The scoundrel deceived you by a false marriage and now he has run

away, but if you get well I will see that you are taken care of, and if you die your child shall not suffer.'

"By that time I had got him into bed and he stopped talking."

Jack Haversham's face was pale and he seemed to be under the influence of some deep emotion.

There was a peculiar look, too, on the features of the veteran detective.

The young man thanked Mr. Damson for the trouble he had taken, and after a few more words of small import the old man departed.

Jack Haversham rose and paced the room in agitation.

"Great Heavens! Phenix, can it be possible that this Colonel Jim is my father?" he exclaimed.

"I do not think there is a doubt about it. He is!" the detective answered. "And now comes another question: Is he the slayer of his brother?"

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE COLONEL RAVES.

THE two men surveyed each other for a few moments, a grave expression upon their faces.

Then Jack Haversham shook his head.

"It is a subject which I would rather not think about, and yet it must be discussed," the young man remarked, slowly.

"Yes, it cannot be avoided," the detective rejoined.

"I will tell you frankly that I had my suspicions about the colonel just as soon as I got the threads of the affair in my hands," Joe Phenix continued.

"Doctor Valentine, who is an expert, and a careful, prudent man, is certain that Mr. Haversham was strangled by a man who was a master of the peculiar way in which the Hindoo Thugs of India dispatch their victims."

"The colonel was in India for a great many years, and so it is probable that he understood how these secret Hindoo murderers did their work."

"Yes, it does seem probable, and yet how horrible it is!" the young man exclaimed.

"Yes, but the man is in such a condition that he is really not quite responsible for what he does, for he is under the influence of liquor nearly all the time."

"Yes, that is true," and then Jack related the particulars of his first meeting with Colonel Jim, and the warning that Doctor Valentine, although an utter stranger, had felt forced to give.

"Knowing that the doctor had been in India, I questioned him as to whether he knew anything about the colonel, explaining that it was my impression that the man had led a pretty wild life."

"Your suspicion was correct."

"Yes, the colonel had been an all-around scamp."

"Now then, do you suppose it is possible that the colonel had a key by means of which he could enter this house without ringing?"

"It is possible," Jack replied, slowly. "He has a key now, I know; I am sure of the fact, but I did not think there was anything strange about the matter."

"In fact, I never gave it a thought, and if I had I would undoubtedly have supposed the butler gave it to him."

"The idea that a man should carry a latch-key around with him for twenty years seems improbable, but men have been known to do things of that kind," the detective remarked.

"Yes, I have heard of such cases."

"Now to construct the theory," Joe Phenix remarked, in his grave and serious way.

"After the colonel left you, he did not go to a hotel, as he said he would, but came to this house. By means of the latch-key he gained admittance without disturbing any one."

"He found Mr. Haversham in the library, and it was pretty certain that he was well under the influence of liquor."

"There was a quarrel between the two brothers, one man drunk, and the other on the verge of delirium tremens; they grappled with each other, and the half-madman—let us hope for the sake of common humanity

that the unfortunate man did not really know what he was doing—committed the murder.

"Then, with the cunning which in some cases accompanies these attacks of frenzy, he secured the will, the roll of bills, and made his escape.

"He had the mad craving for liquor, and now that he had the means to gratify the desire, the probabilities are that he went on a regular debauch, had a fierce attack of the horrors, and was carried to the hospital, just as he related when he made his reappearance."

"Yes, I think you are correct in your surmise," Jack Haversham remarked, slowly.

"In my mind there is not a doubt that you have correctly described how the affair took place."

There was a knock at the door.

It was the butler, Judkin.

"Oh, Mr. Jack, I wish you would come up-stairs to the colonel, for I can't do anything with him!" the old man exclaimed.

"It took three of us to get him up-stairs, for he seemed to lose the powers of his limbs, and we managed to undress and get him to bed, but now he is going on like a lunatic. I got the others out of the room as soon as I could, for, really, he is going on in such a way that it is enough to make a man's blood run cold."

"Better send for Doctor Merriweather," the disguised detective suggested.

"It is probably an attack of the horrors, and he needs an opiate," Joe Phenix continued.

"That is a good idea!" the butler declared. "The Lord knows he needs something, for he is as weak as a cat, and does nothing but rave in the most awful way."

"Send for the doctor immediately!" Jack exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," responded the old man, hurrying away.

"I have been expecting a break-up for the last three days," the veteran detective remarked as he ascended the stairs with his companion.

"I could see that he was growing weaker, and more nervous and flighty."

"He has not been out of the house during that time, and has eaten very little, but drank steadily, and, under the circumstances, I was afraid to suggest to him that he had better hold up for fear that if he stopped it might bring on an attack."

"In a case of this kind, when a man is as far gone as this wretched fellow, it is a pretty hard matter to decide just what is best to be done," Joe Phenix observed.

By this time the two were at the door of the colonel's room, and they could hear the man's wild ravings.

When they entered they were surprised by the change which had taken place in Colonel Jim's appearance.

His face was deathly pale, great drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, and his eyes seemed to have fairly sunken into his head.

He took no notice whatever of the two men as they advanced to his bedside.

"It is a lie!" he exclaimed, his voice hoarse and broken from excessive use. "And you cannot prove it!"

"Oh, no, I am altogether too cunning for that! ha, ha!" and the wretched man laughed, hysterically.

"When Colonel Jim goes in to work a game, you are safe in betting all the money you can scrape together that he will take care to leave no telltale traces behind."

"Wasn't that always the way it was managed in India?"

"How many ugly scrapes did I get into there, and did any man ever succeed in holding me tight and fast?"

"Not not a single one!"

And again the old man laughed loud and shrill, a screeching laugh in which there was no merriment.

"Ah, no, when they thought they had me cornered—when I was in such a position that I could not possibly escape, they discovered that there was always a loophole through which I could get away."

"And in this case—who saw the deed committed? No one!"

"The money is spent, and it brought me the brandy which I craved. I would have

died that night if I had not been able to get all the brandy I wanted, and I have got so that a bottle to me is but little more than a glass would be to an ordinary man."

"The only compromising thing is the document, and that is torn into fifty pieces and gone into the sewer."

"Fob me off with a paltry two thousand dollars a year—I, the man that first gave him his start, and made it possible for him to make a fortune."

"You lie when you say that you have paid me back a dozen times, and that you do not owe me anything!" the sick man screamed.

"You owe to me all you have, and you can never pay me!"

"You will have me thrust from the house! And he means to do it, too!"

"He rises to touch the bell, and as he turns his back I take him by the throat with my thumbs pressed in upon the windpipe."

"It is the old strangler trick that I learned in the jungles of India, and when I get my fingers on his throat I feel that I am going crazy!"

And the voice went up into a wild shriek which made the listeners half shudder.

"All is red—red!" and then he muttered in disjointed accents for a few moments.

"Oh, I am parched with thirst! I am dying for the want of brandy!" he cried, sitting bolt upright in the bed.

"Brandy! Give me brandy! I am choking!"

He tore at his throat with his hands for a moment, then gave a gasp, clutched wildly at the air and fell back on the pillow.

Colonel Jim was dead!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE TEXAN LEARNS THE TRUTH.

THE doctor arrived a few moments after the man breathed his last, and when the particulars were related to him, remarked:

"His time had come; it is the old story of the cord stretched beyond its tension—it snapped, and that is the end."

After the doctor had departed, and the necessary orders were given to the servants, Jack and the disguised detective repaired to the library.

"The mystery is solved and you hit upon the truth," the young man remarked.

"Yes, my work is ended. And now, Mr. Haversham, I am going to volunteer a piece of advice. If I were you I should keep this matter a secret. No good purpose can be served by making the affair public."

"The murderer is beyond the reach of all earthly tribunals."

"Yes, you are right, and the truth undoubtedly would be a sad blow to Victorine."

"Let her remain in ignorance, and after a sufficient time has elapsed, you can see whether your suit will be agreeable to her or not, but in regard to this affair I should not say a single word."

"Really there is no proof, you know, and the matter had better be forgotten."

Jack thought this was good advice, and said he would act upon it.

Then Joe Phenix took his departure, as he desired to communicate with the doctor as soon as possible in regard to the information which he had so unexpectedly secured.

He found Doctor Valentine at home, and the Texan listened attentively while the detective told his story.

"Really, this is one of the most astonishing things that ever happened," Valentine remarked when the recital was concluded.

"I know all about this man, although I never met him, and had no suspicion that he was ever likely to be connected with me in any way."

"Well, that is strange."

"I practiced my profession for a couple of years in London," the doctor explained.

"It was at the time when I met, and married my wife, this woman who now calls herself Bessie Manchester, and while visiting my patients one day, a poor woman who resided in the same house with one of them begged me to take a look at her son, who was very sick."

"She explained that she had no money to

spare for doctors, so she had not called one in, but as her boy had grown so much worse, she felt that she must have a physician, and if I would trust her she would pay me as soon as she could."

"I told her that she should not have hesitated on account of money, for not one doctor out of a hundred would hesitate to give advice in such a case, even if they knew they were not going to be paid."

"The young man was in the last stages of consumption, and I told him frankly that he had not many hours of life left, but I would do what I could to smooth his passage to the grave."

"He was grateful, and before he passed away told me the story of his life."

"He had been employed in a bank, and was getting along finely until he made the acquaintance of this Captain MacIverson."

"Through him he was led into bad company, lost heavily at cards, gambling with the captain and his friends, and at last these evil advisers persuaded him to rob the bank."

"The scheme was very cunningly arranged by the captain, but through an accident it miscarried, and the lad was captured."

"His confederates procured a lawyer for him, and persuaded him not to betray them."

"He was convicted, though, and after serving his time, came out."

"The captain and the rest were waiting for him, and again he became their tool, and while engaged with the others in a robbery one night, they were surprised by the police."

"The lad took to the river, and by concealing himself under a wharf escaped arrest, but laid the foundation of the sickness which was bringing him to his grave. Then, as soon as the gang discovered that he was no longer of any use to them, they deserted him, and the unfortunate fellow crept home to his mother to die."

"This captain, then, really ruined his life and was responsible for his death?"

"Yes, that is the truth. A few weeks after the young man's death I went to India, and I presume that it was right after my departure that he became acquainted with my wife, for this lad said that the captain was interested in the theatrical business."

"A year or so later I read in a London paper that the captain had become heavily involved in an amusement venture, and had taken refuge in flight."

"That, I suppose, was the time when he came to America with my wife, and that was why I could not find any traces of her when I returned to England."

"This captain is a dangerous man, for he is one of the fellows who always keep in the background and get other people to do the work."

"It is plain now why the crooks attacked you so fiercely."

"Yes, it was this man's work. Being warned that I was on his track he attempted to have me killed, but I will soon bring him to a reckoning, now that I know he is the man I seek!" the doctor declared, with firm determination.

But in this uncertain world man proposes and fate disposes.

It was not destined that the two should ever meet.

On that very night MacIverson became engaged in a quarrel with some drunken men in one of the celebrated up-town gambling-houses.

It was through no fault of the captain; the men were "fighting drunk," and ready to pitch on the first who came in their way.

Pistols were drawn—shots were fired—there were a dozen involved in the row, and MacIverson was carried to a hospital, where he died within an hour.

When the Texan heard of the escape of his foe, his brow grew dark, for he had been as inflexible as fate in his pursuit of the man who had wronged him.

"Perhaps it is as well," he muttered.

"The way of the transgressor is hard."

"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord!"

THE END.

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